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Mary Sykes.



# ST. CLAIR;

OR, THE

## HEIRESS OF DESMOND.

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By S. O.

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“ The prohibition of hurting others *internally* is, perhaps, not essential to the foundation of societies, because the transgression of that law doth not much alarm *plain people*. But, where *manners* and *refined sentiments* prevail, the *mind* is susceptible of more grievous wounds than the body, and therefore, without *that* law, a polished society would have no long endurance.”

Lord KAIMES's *Sketches of Morality*, p. 281.

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“ Perche crudo Destino,  
Ne disunice tu s'amor ne stringe  
E, tu' perche ne stringe  
Si ne parte il Destin Perfido amor ?”

GUARINI.

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L O N D O N :

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## P R E F A C E.

THE following little work is simple and obvious in its tendency; it aims at those moral evils, *above* which, the mind broken to the refrigerative principles of prudence and philosophy, rises superior; and *to* which the mind of common-place reflection and ordinary capacity is invulnerable. It is addressed, therefore, to those sentient beings, who, in ascending the scale of intellectual refinement, incur the probability of graduating through each sad degree of intellectual suffering, of which the human mind is susceptible.

Children of passion and of sentiment, it is to you it is addressed; to you, whom the warm effusions of refined feeling, and the glowing visions of animated *fancy*, lead in flowery trammels beyond the "*flat realities of life*;" whose errors are of the

imagination, but whose sorrows are of the heart. Philosophy and ignorance are alike exempt from the influence by which *you* are governed ; the former *contemns* what it cannot *feel*, the latter *derides* what it does not *understand*.

Exquisite native sensibility, nurtured by habit, subtilized by the refinements of superior education, united to a tender heart and lively imagination, and accompanied by the proud consciousness of *merit* superior to the *fortune* of its possessor, is, perhaps, the most fatal donation within the gift of nature. A mind similarly organized, feels itself alone in the midst of life's busiest scenes ; isolated and unconnected, it in vain unfolds the rich hoard of its affections, and claims, without being heard, the congenial smile of a sympathizing friend ; tender and ardent, it languishes in secret and unceasing anxiety to form a still more endearing association ; and the long and fondly-sought treasure *once* discovered, it pursues its attainment,

tainment, even when opposed by circumstances, and condemned by reason,

“D’un aveugle penchant te charm imperceptible  
Frappe, saisit, entraine, et rend un cœur sensible.”

CORNEILLE.

sanctioning its errors by the plausible sophistry of perverted understanding, and firmly attached to *virtue* in her most *obvious* point of view, insensibly violating those minor and social laws by which her power over mankind is best supported.

The following little work, though written at a time of life when *invention* is more alive than *judgment*, is yet almost destitute of *plot*; and the few incidents it relates may probably be traced, with little variation, in the domestic records of many an amiable family, whose peace has been sacrificed to the sentimental imprudence and ardent passions of its most highly gifted member; evincing that the best informed mind, even when associated with the worthiest heart, by insensibly resigning itself to the impulses of a strong

but fatal propensity, may wound, in those delicate points which the scrutiny of the law cannot reach, *that* society it was calculated to enrich by its virtues, by its endowments to adorn.

The conception, however, of the best design is frequently frustrated in its execution; and the fond and busy wishes of the philanthropist are not always succeeded by those abilities which are called on to realize them: and though the HEART of the *author* of the following pages may sigh over the inadequate exertions of genius to assist its efforts, it must still cherish some latent solace in the conscious rectitude of its intentions. The animating plaudits of public *approbation* may refuse to add a livelier throb to its pulsation; but the faint beam of internal satisfaction will still linger to cheer the gloom of its disappointed hopes.

*November 7th, 1802.*



# S T. C L A I R.

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## LETTER I.

Dublin, March 8th, 17—.

THE minister has at last dismissed me; the disappointment came like a reprieve; you will smile at the paradox, but you will understand me—my nature is restored to its dignity. I blush to think it could suffer from adventitious circumstances. The human mind should hold itself independent of the little trials and vicissitudes of every-day life; it should repose in the strength of its own dignity; and the immortal gift of the Deity should rise superior to the petty caprices and oppressions of man: and yet, my dear friend, to be totally uninfluenced by situation, is perhaps the standard of philosophic perfection. I smiled at my father's relation of the fallacy of a great man's promise, as the cynical observation of a man, on

whom the world frowned ; and I should have smiled at it still, had I not been a sufferer by it : so true it is that infallible conviction is only to be gathered from practical experience. In private society every man is allowed to consult his private feelings in the disposition of his favours ; a man in office is to have none :—this man has given the situation he intended for me to his own nephew : all this is very natural ; I only wish he had done it sooner, as it would have saved me some hours of tedious attendance and mortification. I cannot bear to think of it ; my Lord has taken it as a matter of course—shakes his head—looks wise, and says, “ Something better may offer itself.” I have told him it must not be obtained by waiting on the levee of a great man ; he smiles compassionately, and sometimes utters the word, “ romantic.” This will give you some kind of insight into what sort of man it is ; “ his mind a standing pool, his heart a dyke.” As yet however I have seen but little of him, and known less, though his relative and guest. Pray write to my mother when you receive this ; say every thing you can to her—“ her tender buds of hope” have been so often blasted, I feel for her ; this new disappointment,—but it is unavoidable ; your manner of writing will cheer her mind,

mind, and mine must produce a contrary effect ; add a little postscript too, to Lydia and Nanette, and tell them though I am not to be a minister of state, I may be a commander in chief, or a vice-admiral ; but that, at this moment, I would rather be one in their dear little circle, than giving audience to a cringing levee, in all the pomp of office and glare of consequence.

D———— has failed to an immense amount, and the wreck of my father's little property will afford a very limited subsistence to my mother and sisters. Under such circumstances it would be madness to have rejected the offered patronage of Lord L——. Yet I feel that I owe it more to the kind interference of your father, than to the dying request of mine, or the suggestions of his Lordship's own generosity.

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## LETTER II.

THE first thing that Descartes (who made scepticism the leading principle of his philosophic system) found to be certain, was, “ that he thought and reasoned ;” and this is at present the only

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thing

thing of which I am not certain. The bustle in which I am obliged to participate, prevents study and bids defiance to reflection; and while I live in what is called the first company, I can yet find no society; every heart that I would interest, seems to congeal as I address it; and every being to whom I would connect myself, either does not or will not understand me. Then I languish for that intercourse of mind, when animal existence seems to suffer a momentary suspension, as the soul unfolds her powers! My dear friend, I have known moments of bliss; I have known them in the bosom of my family, in the endearments of social life, and in the blessings of friendship; but I am convinced, that I am capable of being happier than I have yet been, and that there are feelings dormant in my heart, more powerful, more poignant, than any which the circumstances of my life have awakened into being. I see plainly, my first day's acquaintance with these people will form the boundary of our intimacy; like the greater part of the world, they glide down the stream of popular opinion, and carefully avoid all those brambles and briers, which reason or nature fling in their course; they avoid the trouble of thinking for themselves, and are thankful that people thought for them a thousand years

years before, without ever consulting that measure of reason which the Deity has endowed them with. This is in a certain degree the character of mankind epitomized. Lord L—— was a patriot, but his Lordship has formed two thousand arguments against the patriotic system, in a place of two thousand a year. Sydney and Russel sold themselves to France; and he says that he has only acted as all patriots would willingly act, if the ministry would but come up to their price. Such, indeed, was the opinion of Sir Robert Walpole, who, it is to be feared, found the infallibility of his maxim, in the corruption of those he brought to its test. Lady L—— is perfectly the woman of fashion, and that is all Lady L—— requires to be; rank and opulence take in with her the whole scale of human perfection; you may judge, therefore, how far I have ascended that of her esteem. She treats me, however, with that indiscriminating and insipid courtesy, which she means should pass for affability and condescension; and if her face is ever susceptible of expression, it is when I dare maintain an opinion of my own, in opposition to one of my Lord's, or some of his noble guests. As for herself, she never has an opinion, and her conversation is an incessant repetition of common-place reflections, which one hears bandied about

from every mouth, whether of the vulgar little, or the vulgar great. They are both esteemed the best people in the world, and are, in short, just such people as one meets with every day, and every where; and these are the persons on whose bounty I am thrown, on whom I am dependant: I dependant! oh merciful Heaven! never! with youth and health, never!

I am just returned from the study of Lord L——. The last assertion of my pen trembled on my lips as I entered it. I repeated to him what I had written to you. My father was very blameable, he said, for educating me in such obsolete and romantic notions: however, his eldest son would be in Ireland in a few weeks, and he had interest both in the civil and military departments, which he was sure he would be happy, both as a friend and as a relation, to exert in my favour: in the interim the preceptor of his youngest boys having been lately promoted to a living, if I would amuse myself with the superintendence of their education, it would lighten the burden of that imaginary dependance I supported with so much restless impatience.—Thus, my dear friend, I have got some little part to play upon the theatre of life. I have obtained permission of my Lord, to set off for his seat in Connaught, with my little pupils, immediately.

ately. This is the first satisfaction I have felt since I left Switzerland. I am weary of this town ; in short, I fear I am weary of myself. When the inclinations and pursuits of early life methodize into habit and form into principle, every change is considered as a trial, and every deviation as a persecution.

I had almost forgot to mention this son, on whom I am to depend for my future prospects : he is the colonel of a regiment, a member of the Irish parliament, and has some interest with the ministry. The second son is a major in his brother's regiment. The colonel and his brother are returning from the continent with a skeleton regiment, and behaved, I am told, with the most intrepid gallantry at the siege of ——. I have just received your letter. Your questions made me smile ! You certainly have a great deal of *academic freshness* about you ! Ah ! what a pity that the coarse friction of the world should destroy this beautiful gloss ! Why did your parents educate you in Switzerland, that you might live in London ? No, my dear friend, I did not, like Ulysses, kiss the earth, when I first touched the shores of my native place ; I beheld them from the bay, with the eye of a painter and a poet, rather than a patriot.

“ Among



“ Among numberless extravagancies which pass through the minds of men,” says Lord Bolingbroke, “ we may justly reckon for one, that notion of a secret affection, independent of our reason, and superior to our reason, which we are supposed to have for our country, as if there was some physical virtue in each spot of ground, which necessarily produced this effect in every one born upon it.” This prejudice, however, is among the few I have weeded from my mind, and the only recollection I retained of my country (which I left in childhood) is associated with so melancholy a reflection of the injuries my father suffered in it, from the religious bigotry and unkindness of his family, as rather to create an emotion of disgust than a thrill of enthusiasm, in again beholding it.

It is scarcely ten years back since Lord L——, by renouncing the faith of his ancestors, obtained the restoration of those titles and dignities which they had conscientiously sacrificed, from a principle of virtue that has gradually decayed in its descent to their posterity. My father seemed to have anticipated the apostacy of his family, and was an age gone in heresy, and deep in Luther, Melancthon, and Erasmus ; while his cousin Lord L——

was.



was still involved in all the sacred mystery of transubstantiation, and wading through Thomas Aquinas and the council of Trent with his jesuitical tutor. The early apostacy of my father, and his imprudent (at least so in the eyes of the world) marriage, rendered him an object of persecution to his family; and, with a younger brother's portion, he sought a retreat under the tolerancy of a Swiss republic, where, influenced by an habitual indolence, and the debility of a shattered constitution, he passed the last twenty years of his life, in literary retirement, and the cultivation of a romantic farm, on the shores of the delightful lake of Geneva. While the *spiritual* concession of his noble relative has been productive of all the *temporal* aggrandizement he expected, my father's *new light*, to speak paradoxically, involved his worldly prospects in obscurity; and his family, by "outward and *very visible signs*," are still suffering for his "*inward and spiritual grace*." Thus different as the notions which influenced them, have been the fates of the apostate cousins. I am sorry I must disappoint your expectations, by sending you only "a map of my mind," when you demand a *chart du pays*, including a sketch of society and manners, &c. &c. But the fact is, the general intercourse of nations in the present day, and  
universal

universal promulgation of knowledge, leave the mind of a modern traveller but little scope for the due exercise of its penetration, in the discovery of national character; that of the Irish we have both read a thousand times, and were it otherwise, on my own observation, I should hazard little, as those whose aggregate constitute the people, and may be supposed best to preserve the national stamp, I have no opportunity of mingling with; and the people of fashion here are like the people of fashion every where else.

Adieu.

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### LETTER III.

IT is certain, that in the scale of nature there is not a more inseparable connexion of cause and effect, than between exquisite sensibility and exquisite misery. I am wretchedly alive to the coldness and indifference I meet with in every countenance, and vainly sigh to find one mind congenial to my own. My heart, in this dearth of cordial intercourse by which I am surrounded, feeds on the recollection of its past enjoyments; and my feelings, without one concordant tone to animate their powers, vibrate only in unison to the strains of memory.

“Full

“ Full on ourselves descending in a line,  
 Pleasure’s bright beam is feeble in delight;  
 Delight intense is taken by rebound;  
 The verberated pleasure fires the heart.”

The vestal coldness with which your question was demanded, made me smile. Yes, the Irish women are beautiful, eminently beautiful, presenting in the softness and vivacity of their manners, all that we most admire in the French, and esteem in the English women;—and as to education, it is the influenza of the day; they are all artists; and elegant musicians, painters, and dancers are to be found everywhere. But, ah! my dear friend, how difficult to find that cultivation of the intellectual graces, that delicacy of taste, that refinement of sentiment, that education of mind, that soul of manner, which places woman in the sphere for which she was created, holding the intermediate degree between angel and man! There are two lovely beings in the house with me, nieces to Lady L——, beautiful as the *houri* of Mahomet. Their charms attract me incessantly to their society,—their insipidity as incessantly repels me; I gaze on them with rapture, listen to them with apathy, and leave them without reluctance: thus, they at once carry their “bane and antidote” about them; and, happily for my heart, their conversation presents a  
 never-

never-failing remedy to the ills their eyes inflict.

“ I knew,” said Madame de Montes-pagne, speaking of her two rivals De Fontange and Maintenon, “ I should triumph over the stupid beauty; but I cannot counteract the witchcraft of an elegant and fascinating conversation.” Do you remember my beautiful fugitive nun of Languedoc? She was my first love; and had her mind borne any proportion to her personal attractions, she had probably been my last. Oh! may I never meet with such a being, whose power over the heart, the passions, and the understanding, is equally irresistible!



#### LETTER IV.

I WRITE to you, my dear friend, from the castle of L——; a venerable structure, the residence of my ancestors, and now the refuge of the most friendless of their progeny: it is situated in what may be termed the classic ground of Ireland; for in this part of Connaught you find the character, the manner, the language, and the music of the ancient Irish in all their primitive originality; and the names Ossian and Fingal are as well known among these  
old

old Milesians as in the Hebrides. To this remote province, whose shores are washed by the "steep Atlantic," were the native Irish driven by political and religious persecution; and as a free intercourse between them and the rest of the nation was not established till after the Restoration, I expect to find many of those literary traditions, which throw a light upon the history and character of every country, which has preserved them from the wreck of time, or the devastation of warfare. At present I possess that sort of existence which Pliny the Younger so often languished to enjoy, that of "being and doing nothing." My little pupils, who were to meet me here from another seat of their father's, are not yet arrived; the weather confines me to the house, without books, without society; and placed in that sphere which vibrates between past happiness and future expectation, the intervening chasm of existence is a mere blank, and my own thoughts the very wretchedest companions I could have.

#### CONTINUATION.

"LIFE," said Pindar, "is the dream of a shadow:" a sublime definition, and exquisitely expressive of the inconsequence of man: mine is the shadow of a sorry dream indeed. I am losing hourly that  
happy

happy faculty of imagination which sheds a false, but pleasing light on my days; hope fades in the gloom of disappointment; my mind sinks into lethargic slumbers, and the faint beams which my understanding emits, serve but to shew me I am wretched. The flow and ebb of joy or sorrow would now roll over my senses unfelt. In short, my dear friend, apathy consumes me; I labour under that depression of mind which slackens the faculties without destroying them, which leaves us sensible of the sad vacuity of intellect without the power of remedy. I feel that life, if not animated by the tender affections of the heart, is insupportable; and that existence, without some object in view, without some pursuit, without passion, to a mind lively and ardent as mine, whether in the world or in solitude, is "the death of the soul." Last night I trifled away a heavy hour in realizing the following ideas which my situation gave rise to.

## TO APATHY.

### I.

THOU, whom unknown my bleeding heart implor'd  
 To fling thy spell athwart the anguish'd hour,  
 Spirit of Apathy! unfelt, ador'd,  
 Ah! now I feel and deprecate thy power.

21

II.

This heart, this warmly throbbing, sensate heart,  
Was never form'd to own thy chilling sway,  
Where festers still the wound of sorrow's dart,  
Where yet the light of joy reflects a ray.

III.

Suspense in all its torturing forms I've known,  
And many a tender, many an anxious fear;  
And on my lip has died the stifled groan,  
And in mine eye has swam the silent tear.

IV.

And I have known the blissful transient hour  
Of heart-sprung ecstasy and pure delight;  
Rapt, I have worshipp'd fancy's witching pow'r,  
And (fond enthusiast!) dar'd her highest flight.

V.

But now no raptur'd moment, no soft woe,  
Can raise the soul, or sublimate the heart;  
Nor can the solemn "joy of grief" bestow  
An hope—or faith in future bliss impart.

VI.

Stagnate each feeling, frozen every sense,  
Each fairy thought enrob'd in languor's stole,  
No visionary bliss can now dispense,  
Or with an airy nothing cheer the soul.

VII.

E'en love, the arch seducer, vainly smiles,  
Flings vainly o'er my couch each bloomy flow'r,  
Or hovers near me with his trait'rous wiles,  
And vainly tries his erst acknowledg'd pow'r.

VIII.



## VIII.

But fled for ever is the frolic day,  
When every sense in Pleasure's train enroll'd;  
Damp'd is each spirit, once so idly gay,  
And all is silent, sullen, tranquil, cold.

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## LETTER VI.

THE village schoolmaster having met me two or three times wandering about the rocks with a book in my hand, took it into his head that I was a learned man, and came to pay me a visit in consequence; for he is himself a very erudite personage, and the prince of mathematicians; he sends rebusses and charades to the Ladies' Magazine; expounds riddles, and starts problems, that no one can solve but himself. He opened his learned intrenchments with Aristotle, talked of categories, interpretations, and predicables; of surfaces and solids, sections and symbols, triangles and tangible bodies, Burgersdic, Des Cartes, and Newton, all in a breath; however, he soon found that "there were more things in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in my philosophy," and I really believe he parted from me with the happiest assurance of his own superiority,



superiority, and of my being little better than a blockhead ; for while he was in the act of defining a quiddity, I interrupted him to inquire into the possibility of procuring an old Irish poem I had heard my father repeat. He shook his head contemptuously, and replied, that he never troubled himself with such barbarous productions, though Aristotle condescends to mention Ireland, and Strabo speaks of it as being in the possession of the Carthaginians. I have seen nothing of my mathematical friend since, and my only companion is an old house-steward, who looks coeval with the castle, and who is so truly attached to the family of L——, that he feels a lively interest for its remotest member ; he loves his glass, sings the best Irish songs in the world, and unites the most respectful manners to a loquacity, when indulged, the most unbounded. From him I learned some characteristical and domestic anecdotes of which I was ignorant. Last night he leaned on the back of my chair while I supped on an excellent salad of his dressing : “ It is five and twenty years, come eve of St. Patrick, young gentleman,” said he, “ since I helped your father on with his surtout in this very room ; he came to get my Lord to intercede with his father about marrying the heretic lady, and changing his religion, but it would

would not do; so said I, 'Please your honour, ' if you would just speak a word to father ' Fitzgerald, he has a charm against the devil ' and all his works, that would soon bring ' you back to the church:' but he only shook his head and smiled, just as you do sometimes; Sir, when you look very melancholy—it was such a smile as brought the tears into my eyes; so just as I was barring the great gate after him, he turned round, shook me by the hand, and squeezed a crown piece into it—we never saw him after. Ah! he was the worthiest and best soul that ever crossed a threshold; I see nobody like him in these days at all."

My dear friend, how fondly does the heart hang upon the praises of the objects of its tenderness and regret! and a strain of elegiac encomiums to the memory of those we love, is, like the music of *Caril*, "sweet though mournful to the soul." The eulogiums of this honest old fellow drew a tear of filial pride and affection to my eye; nor was it alone suffused: the dim eyes of Michael bore testimony to the strength of his feelings; "but he wiped them soon:" and if I am not deep in the politics of the family, it is not Michael's fault; he has the happy art of painting a character by a single stroke; and by that he gave me of his second young master, Major L——, I imagine he is what the

young Irish gentlemen were some years back, when foreign refinement had not reached them, nor exotic civilization introduced the minor morals of life into their minds and manners. Michael says he is worthy of the richest heiress in the county, but that the richest heiress in the county is promised in marriage to his elder brother. Michael then digressed into a little episode, which did not form the least interesting part of his narrative. By the death of an only son, at the age of eighteen Olivia Desmond became only child and heiress to Sir Patrick Desmond, the antiquity of whose family is enriched by the splendour of those actions to which the annals of its country bear testimony. This splendour has not been diminished by its present representative; in the independence of his soul, and the princely munificence of his hospitality, it revives with added dignity. Olivia had been contracted in marriage to my relation, the present Lord L——, on the death of his first lady. The close proximity of two noble estates, and the united strength of two powerful houses, suggested the match; but love suggested another covenant more consonant to the heart of Olivia: she adopted the seducing sophistry of his arguments, by eloping with a young man who had educated her brother, and acted as preceptor to herself in

the polite languages ; and from his lips his charming pupil too soon learned “ it was no sin to love.” The resentment of the Baronet was rather fixed and passive than active and transient ; he did not pursue the husband of Olivia with that virulence which the law permits, but he abandoned his child ; and the vow which cast her for ever an alien from his love and from his inheritance, was breathed on the altar of that God whose sanctuary was violated by the merciless act.

The sucession of twenty years confirmed its inviolability, and the tenderness indulged by the twenty years which preceded them, never once returned, to soften the asperity of that resentment which had dictated it. The unpatronized talents of the husband of Olivia placed her in no higher rank of life than the wife of a country schoolmaster in the North of Ireland. For twenty years, hope still repaired the ravages which filial contrition had inflicted ; but when hope had exhausted its balm, her sensibility shrunk beneath the repetition of its attacks, and she died in the arms of that husband for whom alone she had lived. One daughter only, was the fruit of this unhappy marriage : it was the substituted gift of Heaven for every other blessing. The affectionate child would have expired on the grave of one parent,  
but

but it was requisite she should live to be the support of another. The spirit of her father drooped over the tomb of his wife ; his attention to his profession slackened, and his school gradually decreased. The education and talents of the young Olivia had acquired her some celebrity in the neighbourhood in which she lived, and she soon learnt to derive a benefit from them more grateful to her heart than the admiration they excited, by their industrious application to increase the little revenue of her father, and to afford him those delicacies the state of his health and mind required. The mornings of Olivia were devoted to the education of some young females of rank in the neighbourhood, and the evenings to the administering those comforts to her father, her industry had procured him. The decline of her own health was no prevention to those exertions, which were stimulated by filial tenderness and anxious sensibility ; and the mind of Olivia rose superior to the constitutional weakness which would have subdued its efforts.

This affecting circumstance was repeated by a mutual friend, to Sir Patrick Desmond. Death, when it snatched away the object of his resentment, extinguished its last spark in his bosom ; and his heart, ever alive to virtue, whether suffering or triumphant,

umphant, acknowledges the interesting and amiable Olivia as the idol of its tenderest affection. He has already assigned over to her a handsome independence, by which she is enabled to support her father in comparative affluence, and to indulge the charitable and benevolent propensities of her heart, in their fullest extent. And though she has not yet been able to effect a reconciliation between her two parents, she presides over the princely establishment, and is the acknowledged heiress of one, without labouring under any painful prohibition with respect to the other.

It is a singular circumstance, that those family views, which had been frustrated by the imprudence of the mother, should be not only realized by the daughter, but sanctioned by the tenderest affection of her heart. An attachment has long subsisted between Olivia and Colonel L—, and their nuptials only await the return of the Colonel from the continent. “It was a mortal hard case, your Honour,” said Michael, “to be ordered off to foreign parts, as my young master was, just as he had fallen so desperately in love; and when all matters were about to be made up between my lord and the old gentleman, and we all expected such doings at the castle;—but when he returns from the wars, the wedding will take place. By

the saints we shall have rare work,—and Sir Patrick will make the walls of the old Abbey ring again, or my name is not Michael M'Carty." I know not why this little novellet of Michael's has interested me, except that it is through the medium of self-love; for Michael prefaced his story by saying, "Myself often does be thinking, so I do, when I see your Honour coming home all so lonely, after your long walk, with your book in your hand, that you and Madam Olivia would do mortal well together, for she loves a long walk alone by herself too; and as to the book, it is never out of her hand, as James the footman says, who attends her in all her visits to the sick poor; and James says she has more larning than the parson, not to speak of her playing on the harp. I shall never forget after the Colonel was ordered away, and my Lady brought her to spend some time at the castle, how sweetly she used to sing 'Scar fuint na Companach,' or 'The Parting of Friends;' but it was always after the family were gone to bed, and she used to play at the window of a fine still night; for my Lady, who somehow takes to outlandish song tunes, used to laugh at Miss Livy for singing cronans."

I should like to know this Olivia. But she is at present at Bath, with her grandfather, whose ill health obliges him to

spend a part of every year there. I have, however, visited Desmond Abbey, and have discovered on the shores of a lake, whose wild romantic scenery recalled the sweet lake of Bienne to my mind, a little fishing-house, fitted up in such an appropriate style of fanciful elegance as gives the highest idea of the correct taste which presided over its arrangement: there was an *Æolian* harp in one of the windows, which vibrated sweetly to the breeze as I entered; and at a little distance from the door, an inscription to the nymph of the lake, which I would have copied for you, but that two little fragments written on one of the windows attracted my attention: one, addressed “To first Love,” was signed Frederick L——, the other with the initials of Olivia’s name; it ran thus:

#### FRAGMENT.

##### I.

WHILE o’er thy lip the melting vow  
Of faith and passion breathes;  
And list’ning Mira round thy brow  
Love’s blushing chaplet wreathes;

##### II.

Though still a thousand timid fears  
Amidst her hopes arise,  
The dew thy rosy chaplet wears  
Was shed from Mira’s eyes.



## III.

Yet like this rose, whose fragrant breath  
 Survives its bloom's decay ;  
 So may our loves survive the death  
 Of youth and pleasure's day !

## IV.

When on the wing of future years  
 Our youthful raptures flee,  
 And time shall realize those fears  
 I felt for love and thee ;

## V.

Yet still from mem'ry's record page  
 Our faded joys shall rise ;  
 And love shall gild the cloud of age  
 Reflected from our eyes.

## VI.

Then like this rose, whose fragrant breath  
 Survives its bloom's decay ;  
 So may our loves survive the death  
 Of youth and pleasure's day

Every line of this little effusion is responsive to the address, " To first Love ;" and both probably took rise from the circumstances and conversation of the moment ; when fancy stole her inspirations from the lip of love, and genius realized what passion dictated : if so, how I envy the authors !

## LETTER VII.

THE family of L—— arrived here a few days back, with a crowd of company ; and so little do these people understand the science of employment, or the art of giving pleasure its true zest by the poignant charm of novelty, or the magical force of contrast, that among the sublime and beautiful of nature, among rocks and torrents, woods and mountains, they pursue the same idle routine of frivolous and insipid amusements as interested and engaged them amidst the smoke and din, the bustle and noise, of the dissipated metropolis : thus, neglecting to consult the genius of the place in every thing, Lady L—— has her green-house and aviary in Merrion Square, and her billiard-room and pharo-bank in the country. Notwithstanding all this, I think every one seems tired of the other ; they yawn more in an hour than they laugh in a week, and frequently recall to my mind Voltaire's animated picture of Lassitude and Ennui.

“ De soi même peu satisfait  
On veut du monde, il embarasse  
Le plaisir fuit, le jour se passe  
Sans sçavoir ce que l'on fait.”

Ah !

Ah ! but, my good friend, there is somebody else arrived in the country besides Lady L—— and her group of automatons ! It is Olivia, the heroine of my little novel. She appeared at a *fête-champêtre* given by Lady L—— last night. Shall I confess a weakness, which, knowing me as you do, you have probably anticipated and smiled at ? Often, since I first heard of this amiable young person, have my heart and imagination enriched her with all those touching graces, those seldom met, and superior endowments, with which I have so frequently decked the “ celestial visitant,” my own rapturous melancholy loves to create. I cannot describe to you with what emotions I heard her announced, and beheld her enter ; yet the appearance of Olivia is not of that striking description to fix the gaze of admiring attention amidst the splendour of a ball-room, and a crowd of beautiful competitors. Olivia is rather bewitching than beautiful ; but there is a certain artless poignancy in her air, an original something, that possesses a charm not to be defined : it will not strike every one, but those it does will feel it sensibly. Her movements are graceful beyond the reach of art, for hers is the grace of sentiment rather than external attention, and is in my eyes a thousand times more beautiful than even beauty itself ; it animates

her every action, but it is most eminently conspicuous when she dances. A thousand times, as her light form flitted by me in the dance, did I feel the full force of the Spectator's assertion, that "to be a good dancer, it is requisite to have a good understanding." There was a soul in the dancing of Olivia, that seemed even to dissipate the fashionable listlessness of her tonish partners, and a wild, native feminine vivacity in her air and manner, that seemed not the effect of confidence, but the cause of the most winning ease and modest freedom: yet I thought at times she appeared to lose all interest in the gaiety in which, a moment before, she seemed to participate with all her heart; an air of abstraction stole over her animated countenance, as if she involuntarily retired within herself; and a glance of intelligence lurked in her eye, that slyly seemed to satirize the lively sallies her lips dispersed to the triflers that fluttered round her; while the tone of her voice, the most touching, the most harmonious I ever heard, constantly raised expectation, the matter which excited its powers, destroyed. I hovered so constantly near her, that it was almost impossible I should not attract her notice; more than once her eye met mine, and while she spoke to Lady L—— in a half-whisper, I observed her Ladyship honoured me with  
a glance,

a glance, and pronounced my name sufficiently audible for me to hear it. Do you think I was not proud of the circumstance? Indeed I was! I have since pronounced my name in twenty different tones. Do you know I think there is magic in a name? so did Mr. Shandy.

“———And ev’ry tongue that speaks  
But Romeo’s name, speaks heav’nly eloquence,”

says the impassioned Juliet.

Olivia! is not Olivia a sweet name? it is certainly an Italian appellation, and yet it is a very prevailing one among some of the old Connaught families. I am such a bashful blockhead, I could not for the soul of me muster up courage to get myself introduced to her, nor indeed did I much covet a ball-room introduction to such a woman as Olivia. She retired early, and I followed her example, and have been ever since thinking that Colonel L—— must be the happiest man in the world. Heigh ho! do you know I could find it in my heart to fall in love, if I too could meet with an Olivia.

“Perduto, e, tutto il tempo  
Che in amore non si spende,”

says Tasso; poor Vanini\* said the same,

\* He was consigned to an Auto-da-fé by the Inquisition for asserting that every hour was lost which was not spent in love.

and burnt in “ flames no way metaphorical” for the assertion. Should I be so fortunate as to get acquainted with this interesting woman, I think it will do me all the good in the world; it will promote a free circulation of thought, and rouse the stagnant energies of my mind. It is so pleasant to meet with a being whose ideas assimilate to our own ! it is the foundation of all social bliss ; and if there is not some coincidence of mind between Olivia and your friend, the supposed intuition of sympathy has deceived him wofully indeed. I am told she is a very superior musician, reads much, and writes many such little effusions as I found in the fishing-house. She loves too, and is beloved: this would render our friendship singular and delicious, and dispel at once the only danger I should have to fear from so sweet a connexion. How unlike are the females I have met with here, to the idea I have formed of Olivia ! they are so vapid, so trifling, so inconsequent ! The society altogether indeed here is insupportable ; conversation is at its lowest ebb, dry common-place, and uninteresting ; neither strengthened by reflection, nor chastened by sentiment ; neither enlivened by wit, nor enriched by literary observation. As you may suppose therefore, I spend little time in the drawing-room of Lady L—. Being alone in a crowd,

crowd, is to me of all solitudes the most frightful ; and I always prefer a ramble amidst the mountains and rocks of this wild country, or a seat amidst the picturesque ruins of a very fine abbey in the neighbourhood, to the tonish garrulity of her Ladyship's fashionable guests. This self-retirement Pope terms the "*pis aller* of mankind:" it is certainly a *pis aller* with me ; for I have a mind formed for society, and a heart, whose every pulsation throbs in unison with its pleasures and its endearments.

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## LETTER VIII.

It is long, my dear friend, since a post-day has been to me "a day of melody;" existence seems to suffer a degree of suspension in the intermediate intervals ; and the pleasure that thrills through my heart, when I receive a letter from you, or my beloved little family, and the fears, the tender anxieties a disappointment occasions, are my only proof that my feelings are yet alive to the influence of bliss or anguish ; and that there yet throb some affectionate hearts, in whom I excite, for whom I feel, an interest. Were it not for  
that,

that, what were the life of man? I have this moment received your long-wished-for letter. I am not at all surprised that your literary acquaintance disappointed you. You are amazed to find a man of genius a coxcomb, and the celebrated author of —, a pragmatist fellow! But prepare yourself, my dear friend, for many such disappointments in your journey through life, if you expect to meet with perfect conformity of parts and consistency of character, in the “summary and central point of all existence, man.” Ticho Brahe, who laughed at that phenomenon\* which filled (at that time) the world with consternation and dread, would yet resign himself to the most desponding depression of spirits, if an old woman was the first to salute him in the morning, or a hare crossed him at the entrance of his house. The immortal Verulam has been characterized as

— “The brightest, wisest, meanest of mankind!”

James II. of England, as a brave general, a dastardly monarch; Louis XIV. the hero of his age, the tool of his mistresses; and Aristotle, the prince of philosophers, and who obtained as universal an empire over the minds of mankind, as did his pupil

\* An eclipse.

over



over their lives and properties, the most finished fop in Greece. Such, my dear friend, are the lights and shades of the human character; but a young mind, reared in retirement and solitude, knowing the world only by books, and judging of man by its own virtuous bias, enters on busy bustling life full of "the vulgar errors of the wise;" giving to virtue, or to genius, its appropriate qualifications, and, in the unbridled expectations of imagination, sketching a prelude for subsequent mortifications: but the glow of its pleasing delusion soon fades in the disappointment of worldly experience; and when it finds that beauty has no inseparable connexion with goodness, genius with virtue, talents with rectitude, nor speculative philosophy with moral excellence, it sighs over the ruins of fond expectations, and but too often exclaims, "Alas! poor human nature!" For my own part, my own disappointments in this respect have been so numerous, that I should not be much surprised to find that this new "dweller of my thoughts," this dangerous Olivia, had not (to use a term of Swift's) *thrown off all the leavings of the sex*; and that is, I assure you, the strongest proof I could give of my scepticism to the perfection of our own natures.

I must thank you a thousand times for your letter, and your kindness to my mother;

ther ; but I think it were advisable for her not to leave Switzerland until my prospects clear up a little ; besides that, she can manage her little income there, to more advantage than either here or in England. Ah ! my dear friend, it is this helpless little family that at once attaches me to life, and embitters it.

“ The valiant in himself, what can he suffer ?  
Or what need he regard his single woes ? ”

What indeed ? Let me know if you have heard from our old preceptor at Geneva, or any of our school-companions ; I found many of their names written in an old Corderius that had got among the few books I brought over with me : how many pleasant boyish recollections did it revive ! Yet after all I doubt if the state of childhood is susceptible of all the happiness ascribed to it ; it is rather an exemption from evil, than an actual enjoyment of happiness, which constitutes its chiefest blessing. There are many hidden sources of delight, dormant at that period, which enrich and elevate our being in a maturer day. The pleasures of the imagination and the mind, the retrospect of past happiness, and the anticipation of future, are unknown to the child : he lives but for the present moment ; and has he not in that the advantage over all the philosophers of the earth ?

LETTER

## LETTER IX.

I HAVE met with an adventure.—Yesterday I flung my gun at my back, and rambled about the mountains for some time without firing a shot, until, wearied by the sultry influence of the hour, I directed my steps to a little coppice, that wound down the sides of a rugged steep, and seemed to screen from the chill mountain blast a cottage, whose blue curling smoke rose above the plantation of fir and copper-ash that sheltered it. Struck by its picturesque situation, I was induced to sketch it, with the surrounding scenery, in the blank leaf of a book I held in my hand. When, on a nearer approach, I heard the confused prattle of childish voices, and supposing it some little receptacle of learning,

“Where sits the dame disguis’d in look profound,  
And eyes her fairy throng, and turns her wheel  
around,”

I advanced cautiously to take a glance of one of those characteristic and living pictures, which equally interest my heart and taste; and the thin foliage of a low quickset hedge favoured the intention.  
Within

Within the door of the cottage, with all the insignia of birch and spectacles, sat the president of the little society, “stiff, dry, and sage;” on either side stood a weeping pupil, whose brows were encircled with the disgraceful honours of a dunce’s cap, and whose inarticulate voices sobbed over the immortal feats of “the Seven Champions of Christendom.” At a small distance from the entrance of the hut, a little group circled round a white paling, over which leaned a female form, light and graceful as that of an *hamadryad*. A veil but half drawn, discovered the prettiest mouth and chin in the world; and a voice the most harmonious, alternately dispensed encouragement and approbation, sometimes chid and sometimes advised, with a sweetness that must have ensured reformation in the attentive little auditory to whom it was addressed. The fascinating preceptress having finished her examination, and exhorted them to an observance of their moral, religious, and school duties, dispensed rewards proportioned to their merits: some got a cake, some a toy, some a book, from a little basket that hung on her arm: even the poor weeping dunces were not forgotten, in spite of the remonstrances of their angry instructress; and one chubby smiling being got a kiss into the bargain—(how I envied

envied the little rogue !) She then thanked the lady-president for her great attention, and departed : she was followed by a servant, who drove a garden chair ; and as she walked slowly up a steep hill, I fled from my covert, and darting through a thick plantation, sprung over a ditch, so as to cross the path she had taken. No *ruse de guerre* was ever better managed : I met her full—it was Olivia ! Had I indulged myself in the impulse of the moment, I should have bent my knee to her as she passed, with more animated devotion than ever votarist did at the shrine of his patron saint ; but I only bowed respectfully ; and even that I felt presumptuous, as I had not been introduced to her. To my astonishment, she addressed me, with the most winning ease, by my name ; and her inquiries for the family of L—— formed a kind of excuse for my walking by her side, which was prolonged by her noticing the book I held in my hand. “ Ah ! Ossian,” said she, with animation, turning over the leaves, and reading with great energy the following lines : “ Often does the memory of former times come like the evening sun on my soul.”—“ Often indeed !” said she expressively ; and after a pause of a moment, she added, “ This is the poetry of the heart—and that heart which is endowed with most sensibility, will

will be most alive to its beauties." She paused, I believe for me to speak, but I continued silent, and she went on (I think with a look of disappointment): "There is indeed a nutritive enthusiasm requisite to cherish a taste for Ossian, which very few possess."—"And you exclude me, I fancy," said I with a smile, "from the number of that elected few."—"Had such been my supposition, politeness would have spared the observation; but he who makes a work the companion of a solitary walk, cannot do it from ostentation, and he who reads Ossian from taste, cannot be a *common man*."

How do you think I received the compliment? Do you not fancy you behold me, with the colour rushing to my face, pleasure dancing in my eyes, and my whole frame agitated by those emotions which awakened delight ever produces in me? So far indeed you are right; but if you imagine you hear me stammering out a compliment in return, you are deceived. I continued as silent as a Faquir in the act of penance, and fixed my eyes on her face, with a gaze so ardent, as to oblige her in some confusion to withdraw hers, and probably left it a matter of doubt with her, whether I was a fool or a coxcomb, or both; for I observed a sly smile steal over her countenance, and she began to  
talk

talk as she did the other night in Lady L——'s drawing-room, adapting the conversation to the folly of her auditor. I could not support this, and I abruptly interrupted her, by asking what style of reading she preferred; for the soul of me, I could not torture out any thing else to say: she replied, "That which promotes the social virtues of the heart, by delineating their effects in the most amiable and attractive light, and which is calculated to increase those sensibilities that bind us to life; but I am indeed a truly desultory reader, perusing every thing I meet with, reading much less than I wish, and much more than I ought."—"And can that be possible?"—"Oh! very! life is so brief, and its duties so numerous, that a too intense application to any one pursuit (situated as I am) must eventually injure another. I have a father, a grandfather, who have every claim on my attention and care: I have dependants who look up to me for support, inferiors for example—sacred ties! Did I neglect them, I should be unworthy of the happiness they confer."—"Thrice happy," exclaimed I with enthusiastic admiration, "are the objects who share in these sacred ties, and thrice blest the man who shall call that being his, so worthy of the happiness they indeed only can confer!"—"The energy of your manner,"

manner," said she blushing, " blinds me to the flattery of your encomium, and gives that an air of truth which was only meant as a compliment."—" No, Madam, I am no flatterer: a flatterer is insensible to reproof; and I feel sensibly the full force of yours. Though not always speaking what I think, I always think what I speak, and the energy of my manner only rises in proportion to the merit of the subject which elicits it."

She bowed, and laughingly said, " To accuse you of a crime, I see, only plunges you deeper in the guilt you deny; but I fear I have drawn you out of your road, and intruded on your time."—" Thus," said I, catching her gaiety, and answering her from Douglas, " to lose my hours is all the use I wish to make of time."

" Nay then," said she, " I must fly in my own defence." The servant then coming up with the garden chair, she sprung lightly into it, before I could offer her my hand (though I had it in delightful contemplation), and wishing me good morning, drove off. How long I remained on the spot where she left me, I know not; but the family were at dinner when I got home, and the next morning a boy came for a reward for bringing me my Ossian; how or where I dropt it, I cannot recollect. Nothing can be more amiable



amiable than the character this charming woman supports, even among those who are but ill calculated to form any just estimate of a being, so every way above their powers of discrimination, and the ordinary level of her sex. Some rigid old maids and disappointed widows accuse her of volatility; and some un-ideal girls and empty boys, of pedantry; but no one dares to doubt the excellence of her heart, or the brilliancy of her talents; and for my own part, she has given me a more elevated idea of human excellence, than, even in my most sanguine moments of philanthropy and good-will to my fellow-creatures, I ever dared to indulge in. Her grandfather is esteemed and respected by all ranks, and is the only gentleman in these parts who cultivates Irish literature, or appears anxious to rescue from total oblivion the poetry and music of his country. He is in every respect the true type of the old Irish chieftain: implacable in his resentments, making decision the criterion of his wisdom, and shewing equal aversion to the retracting an error as a right action; generous, open, and unsuspecting, even where caution might be warranted by experienced imposition; indiscriminately hospitable and benevolent; and considering himself as bound to support the welfare and interest of his family, even to the

the remotest member that can claim a shadow of affinity to him. His house, I am told, displays the profuse abundance of other times, rather than the refinements of modern luxury; and his Irish manuscripts, his harper and his ruins, hold the next place in his heart to his granddaughter, whom he loves to idolatry.

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## LETTER X.

YESTERDAY, thinking of nothing more than Olivia, thinking of nothing less than beholding her, I entered the drawing-room abruptly, and found her there alone. Imagine my confusion—but it vanished when she addressed me. This woman has the power, beyond all I ever met, of conferring that ease on others which so eminently characterizes her own manners. In a moment I was seated by her on the couch, and listening to her complaints of disappointment at not finding Lady L—— at home. “And here,” said she, taking up a book she had flung down at my entrance, “I had forgot her Ladyship and myself over a volume of Marmontel. In works of taste and fancy there is a tenderness, an animation, in the French style, that hur-  
ries

ries away the heart and imagination, even when unsanctioned by the judgment; and this sorcery of style, though certainly not indigenous to the sterner soil of British literature, is rapidly engrafting itself upon its stronger productions.”—“I have found the accuracy of your remark,” said I, “in the style of many English works which I have read since my arrival in this country; though Lord Roscommon, in his celebrated critique on the two styles, almost bids defiance to their amalgamation; and though it is certain that the English do retain the ‘sterling bullion,’ yet we must not deny that the French possess the power of enriching the republic of letters, by working it to the greatest advantage; we are also indebted to them for that style of novel-writing which, to the destruction of romance, distinguishes the present day.”

“Yes,” said Olivia, “it is to the pen of Madame la Fayette, more powerful than the wand of Urganda, that we owe the annihilation of giants and dwarfs, terrific heroes and supernatural heroines.”

“And it was for a woman only,” said I, smiling, “to vindicate the feelings of the heart; for it is the tender and *subtle* fancy of a woman only that can enter into all the delicate minutiae of its emotions.”

“And yet,” said Olivia, archly, “you men consider the minds of women, as the Swiss do their gold-mines in La Valais, which the public good will not suffer to be opened.”

“And with reason,” said I. “Self-preservation is the most indelible law of nature, and instinctively teaches us to weaken those powers which, even in their most debilitated state, are but too dangerous. For my own part, a learned attack from the whole college of the Sorbonne would be less formidable to me, than one touching sentiment from the lips of a lovely woman.” Here the entrance of Lady L—— put an end to our conversation, and I was delighted to observe that Olivia ineffectually struggled to bear a part in the detail of flippant nothings which always constitute her Ladyship’s discourse. I left the room immediately, but by lingering about the lawn till Olivia’s carriage was ordered, I obtained a bow and a smile as she passed me.

And of what consequence was it to me that she bowed and smiled?—she did so the next moment to a peasant who saluted her. But, heavens and earth! there are as many various characters in a bow and smile as in the Chinese language: how I hated them both at the levee of a minister of

of state : but oppose the seraph smile of Olivia to the sycophantic leer of a hackneyed placeman, and fill up the intermediate degrees if you can.

My mother's silence fills me with a thousand alarms. Lord Bolingbroke terms suspense "the only insupportable misfortune in life," and it is certainly the one above all others I can bear with least patience or fortitude ! If Monsieur Soutumont wrote to you, he probably mentioned my little family : pray let me know, and write soon.

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## LETTER XI.

You have often said to me, my dear friend, when chiding me for some little extravagance of sentiments, or conduct, "There is a romantic independence of mind about you almost savage ; for I doubt if you will ever submit to the subjection of those subordinations which reason sanctions for the well-being of society, and from which the truest independence flows." But the fact is, I can wear my chains as light and as willing as another, provided they are self-imposed ; and then I wind them round me with an ease and grace that renders me insensible to their restriction.

tion. I undertook the education of my little cousins with pleasure, and pursued the task with increasing interest, until what I meant to confer as an obligation, evidently became a duty ; and from that moment, weariness and reluctance have marked the pursuit. These narrow-minded people defeat their own interest, by the greedy and over-reaching avarice with which they urge its promotion. Education is always the snare which parental anxiety, ungoverned by reason, lays to entrap possibility and common sense. These people weary me by their importunities, their caprice, and their objections : my Lord thinks wisdom should be taught as religion was heretofore, by stripes ; and my Lady, whom nature never burdened with one original idea, supposes that all intellectual information should be “governed by a clock.” You who know how I was educated by my father, who levied,

“ ———With an easy sway,  
A tax of profit from my very play;”

whose system of education, though perfect, was never obvious, and who stole me into improvement, under all the attractions of pleasure ; you will judge how inimical my sentiments are on this head to those common place ideas of these people : what is worse, they deliver their opinions

nions with an air so imposing, as almost forces me to feel myself the thing they would make me; so true it is, that even the freedom of agency may be limited by situation, and liberality of sentiment and stability of principle weakened, if not destroyed, by a long and close association with narrow, vulgar, and illiberal minds. I at first seized upon this employment, as the most efficacious antidote against that lassitude and dejection, which my wounded spirits and the nervous affection of my constitution had produced, as well as the means of liberating me from the shackles of dependance. "For it is certain," says Zimmerman, "that the moment we resolve not to be idle, and to bear our sufferings with patience, the anguish of our souls abates;" and mine were no common feelings. I had just lost a father—such a father! I had left a mother declining in health and years, and an unprotected sister, who looked up to me for that support I can only obtain by the precarious exertions of a man I despise. I doubt too, if the impatience of my temper, and that irritable independence of spirit, which still stubbornly resist the chilling principles of prudence and interest, will suffer me to wait on the tardy operations of a man, who can only be stimulated to immediate and active exertion, by self-interest or pride;



and who, by retaining me in a state of independence, can gratify at once these two leading principles of his nature. There are, I believe, many such characters in the world, who make interest the grand pivot on which every action turns ; but this day introduced me to a man, who has for the moment put me in humour with the world, and, what is more, with myself. Sir Patrick Desmond made one at a large dinner-party here to-day, from which female society was excluded ; and consequently his charming grand-daughter did not accompany him : however, as neither Horatian elegance, nor Attic delicacy, rendered the entertainment the “ feast of reason and the flow of soul,” the ladies lost little by a prohibition, which only excluded them from a conversation, of which horses and dogs formed the chief topic. There is more point of manner and character of appearance in this old chieftain, than ever I beheld united in one person : his tall figure, rising even to majesty, bends gently forward, rather apparently from the effects of recent illness, than old age ; and the glow that still burns on his cheek, seems to owe its warmth to the vivacity of his mind, rather than the strength of his constitution. He speaks of his country, as if he loved it with the idolatrous fondness of a primitive Roman ; and in a broad provincial



provincial accent, and that curious felicity of expression he has borrowed from its original tongue, makes its language, music, and antiquities, the almost constant subject of his conversation : and as no one seemed anxious but myself, to participate in such a conversation, he seemed flattered by my curiosity and attention. When I was assisting him to his carriage, he spoke of my father, whom he had known intimately, as the fondest son would wish to hear a father spoken of ; and gave me a very cordial and pressing invitation to the Abbey : on the latter I shall make no comment.

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## LETTER XII.

*“ Et je touchais à ces moments,  
Trop courtes de mon bonheur.”*

THERE are perhaps in the life of every sentient being, certain moments which memory never relinquishes, and which survive the recollection of more recent periods and more important hours : such are those which I have this day passed with Olivia and her grandfather.

Sir Patrick Desmond breakfasted here in the morning, and insisted on taking me

home with him, to shew me the ruins of a castle, erected by one of the Hynialls (the Agamemnons and Achilleses of Ireland), and a Druidical Cromlech, both on his estate. The old Baronet has treasured a rich hoard of traditional anecdotes, which he takes pride in displaying ; and seemed not a little flattered by the attention and curiosity his recitals awakened in the mind of his auditor. We both displayed as much warmth in fixing the native place of Ossian, as the commentators of Homer, the spot which had the honour of giving him birth. Every mountain in the province was enriched by a feat of Fingal ; not an old woman in the country, but could recite a poem of his inspired son ; and he pointed to a promontory, which distance almost reduced to a shadow, the extreme point of which is still called the Seat of Fingal (of whom the lower order of Irish repeat many improbable tales). To all these demonstrative proofs, I could only recapitulate the opinions of Blair, the arguments of Home, and the sentiments of Gibbon ; and we both arrived at Desmond Abbey, in the same mind with respect to Ossian as we set out. We were still skirmishing when we entered the drawing-room, where we found Olivia. I wish you could have seen the animated manner in which she received me ;

me; the air, at once tender and playful, with which she chid her grandfather for venturing out so early, while still an invalid. She is full of graces! She was playing the harp when we entered; and at my very earnest request, resumed her seat at the instrument. "Your ear, I suppose, Mr. St. Clair," said the Baronet, "is made up to the delicacies of foreign music; and indeed, I believe Livy is the only girl in the kingdom who has the courage to oppose national taste to fashionable prejudices."

"The Irish music," said I, "is, in my opinion; calculated to harmonize with every feeling of the soul; it is the music of sentiment and passion; and that is the true music of the heart."

"Then we will have *Emuinch Ecnuic*," said the Baronet, with a smile. Olivia tuned her harp; and after a prelude, in which she displayed an execution, bold, various, and correct, struck a few low chords, and sung the air, first to the original Irish words, and then to a translation of her own. You know my sensibility, my rapturous enthusiasm with respect to music. I was sensibly affected; the air, so wild, so plaintive, the melancholy simplicity of its expression, the sensibility to its powers, which trembled in the melodious tones of the enchanting songstress, all powerfully

affected me ; and my emotion increased, as I read the reflection of my feelings, in the divinely touching countenance of Olivia : it seemed a stimulus to her delightful exertions, and she appeared to draw inspiration from the admiration she had excited. Her last verse was the best ; and her voice, as it died over the faint vibration of the chords, had all the heart-breaking melancholy softness of the Eolian lyre. She ceased, and I remained silent and overwhelmed, till roused by the Baronet's hearty laugh of gratified parental and national pride : and Olivia gaily said, " Your musical sensibility is so much alive, Mr. St. Clair, that if I had a mind to banish my welcome guest, I should play the '*Renzt de Vache*\*,' at this moment with success." I could not help telling her, and with a look I believe that ratified the assertion, " that there lurked a spell in her *voice*, to counteract the magic of its *music* ; and that I should find it less difficult to resist the influence of the song, than the attraction of the songstress."

The hours fled, I cannot describe how ; but I still feel as if but just awakened

\* Forbidden to be played among the Swiss soldiers in the French service, as it awakened a longing recollection of their country, and caused desertion.

from a delightful impression of a blissful dream; and this one day saves me from the apprehension of

“ Mourant sans avoir vecu.”

The L—— family had supped before I returned. Never did their society appear to me so cold, so vapid, so uninteresting. Have you ever felt the chilling transition of leaving the society to which intellect and sympathy had attached you, for that in which you felt yourself isolated and unconnected? It is, in my opinion, one of the most painful sensations to which the human mind is liable. But the remembrance of Olivia soon drove away every reflection less delightful; her dangerous little attentions, her animated air, her seducing manners, her music, her conversation, were present to me the whole night. It is not love, it is not passion, this woman is capable of exciting; it is delirium! The dream may be transient; but were I the elected object of her choice, (merciful Heavens!) I would not resign that dream, for all the realities of a vapid eternity.

It is now an hour past midnight, and I am going to read “Werter.” I had almost forgot to tell you, Olivia lent it to me; and the passages marked by her pen-

cil, give me the most flattering conviction of the coincidence of our opinions and the congeniality of our tastes.

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## LETTER XIII.

FROM OLIVIA.

It has been said, that every author has the heel of Achilles; and the enclosed little poem will teach you where to apply the assertion in its fullest force. In fact, I do not wish to deny, that I was highly gratified by your approbation; for to be insensible to applause is the first step towards being careless of deserving it. The singular and plaintive beauty of the air of "*Emuinch Ecnuic*," which, replete with the characteristic wildness and melting pathos of the Irish music, may be deemed an epitome of Irish composition, induced me to attempt an adaptation of English words to its melody; and the ideas I had treasured of the old Irish fragment of that name, and which I had learnt from my father in my earliest childhood, though they gave me some assistance, were not sufficient to ensure me success in the undertaking; for the music and poetry of  
the

the Irish are so closely analogous, and the sound so faithful an echo to the sense, that the former seems to bid defiance to the adaptation of any other language to its melody; and the latter must always sustain an injury, in its energetic and idiomatic delicacies, when given through the medium of a translation. The following attempt, therefore, which I submit to your judgment, is but a very faint type of the original, which abounds in the most curious felicity of expression and exquisite simplicity of thought. My grandfather, who is anxious to put my little poetical fugitive into your hands, will have the pleasure to deliver you this; and you will do me the favour to send me back Werter (if you have finished its perusal) by the servant.

## EMUINCH ECNUIC;

OR,

NED OF THE HILLS\*.

I.

“ AH! who is that, whose thrilling tones  
Still put my tranquil sleep astray  
(More plaintive than the wood-doves’ moans),  
And sends my airy dreams away?”

II.

\* The hero of this, and many other national ballads, was the chief or captain of one of those numerous banditties which infested Ireland during that period when religious



## II.

“ ’T is I, ’t is Edmund of the hills,  
 Who puts thy tranquil sleep astray;  
 Whose plaintive song of sorrow thrills,  
 And sends thy airy dreams away.

## III.

“ Here nightly, through the long, long year,  
 My heart with many a love-pang wrung,  
 Beneath thy casement, Eva dear,  
 My sorrows and thy charms I ’ve sung.

## IV.

“ Thine eye is like the morn’s soft gray,  
 Tinted with ev’ning’s azure blue;  
 Its first glance stole my soul away,  
 And gave its every wish to you.

## V.

“ Like a soft gloomy cloud’s thine hair,  
 Ting’d with the setting sun’s warm rays,  
 And lightly o’er thy forehead fair  
 In many a spiry ringlet plays.

religious animosity and civil discord involved its unfortunate natives in all the horrors of anarchy and warfare. The accounts which are given of *Emuinh Ecnuic* are various and improbable; but that most current, and most consonant to truth, sketches him as an outlawed gentleman, whose confiscated lands and forfeited life animated him to the desperate resolution of heading a band of robbers, and committing many acts of desperation; which were frequently counteracted by a generosity almost romantic, or supported by a spirit almost heroic. A warrior and a poet, his soul was “often brightened by the song;” and *Eva*, the daughter of a northern chieftain, was at once his inspiration and his theme.



“Oh ! come then, rich in all thy charms;  
 For, Eva, I ’m as rich in love;  
 And panting in my circling arms,  
 I ’ll bear thee to old Thuar’s \* grove.”

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## LETTER XIV.

TO OLIVIA.

I MUST thank you, Madam, a thousand times for this new mark of your attention, so grateful to my heart, and so flattering to my taste ; for to be supposed to have a taste for genius may certainly be ranked next to its actual possession ; but I shall not say a word of the merit of your little poem ; it has already excited a tribute of admiration more *naïf* and animated, than in a cooler moment, when neither borne away by the sorcery of your song, or the charm of your voice, it could extort. It is certain that

“ L’oreille est le chemin du cœur.”

And though my mind may be more susceptible of the excellence of your poetry as

\* A mountain in Ulster, county of Armagh.

I read it, yet I confess my heart was more touched by its recitation from lips which

“Not by words pleas'd only ;”

however, it was written by your hand, and that alone is sufficient to raise it in my opinion, above the most sacred relic that ever decked the shrine of Loretto.

I am sorry that you have exacted obedience on the only point on which I would not most devoutly pay it : I cannot send you Werter by the servant—it would be profanation ; besides, it will serve as an excuse for my intrusion at the Abbey sooner than I intended. I shall then have the pleasure of returning Werter into, perhaps, the only hands worthy of him ; and even in doing this I shall give no small proof of self-denial. It is true I may have another, but that other will not be Werter. —The strokes of the pencil guide and confirm my taste. I feel an ineffable pleasure in thus finding a coincidence in our sentiments. I imagine myself seated by the charming owner of this book ; I hear her touching voice express with truth and delicacy the emotion its perusal excites, as when she recommended it to me the other evening ; I almost think she addresses me in the language of Werter, “It is most certain, that what renders one person  
3 more

more necessary to another, is a similarity of taste and sentiment." I am not ashamed to confess myself the slave of imagination. Deprive man of the joys that flow from that source, and you "make him poor indeed." The unfeeling, the sordid, are sufficiently punished in being excluded from a participation of those pleasures which elevate us in the scale of thinking beings.

I feel a certain depression of spirits from reading *Goethe*, which communicates a sensation to my mind, not perhaps unlike the "joy of grief," so frequently mentioned by Homer, and your favourite Ossian. Is it from the contagious melancholy of the book, or some other cause?—I know not, nor dare I analyze my feelings. But why tease you with an insipid history of my sensations?—I have already to apologize for my intrusion on your time and patience, and yet I am going to make a still greater demand on both;—your poem has tempted me to "*string my lyre with emulating vigour*," and I have the courage to submit to your perusal the effects your inspiration (and yours only) has produced.

## O D E

TO FANCY.

## I.

OH thou ! who erst with glowing fingers wreath'd  
 Around my youthful brow thy bloomiest flow'rs,  
 Respiring odours of the wildest sweets, and breath'd  
 Thy frolic spirit o'er my youthful hours ;

## II.

Mistress of bland illusions ! where art thou ?  
 And whither are thy soft enchantments fled ?  
 Why droops thy wreath around my youthful brow ?  
 Its sweets exhausted, and its beauties dead ?

## III.

Why fade thy glowing visions on my view ?  
 Where is thy potent spell to cheer the heart ?  
 Why change thy rainbow tints to sablest hue ?  
 Ah ! where (sweet sorc'ress), thy life-giving art ?

## IV.

Oh ! come, but come not as thou late were wont,  
 With faded blush and matted locks unbound,  
 Chasing my footsteps in each dreary haunt,  
 And scattering *rue* and *deadly nightly-shade* round :

## V.

But come, with orient blush and sunny tress,  
 The tear of transport gleaming in thine eye ;  
 Thy lips, where revels many a fond caress,  
 Thy rosy lips exhaling rapture's sigh.

## VI.

Thy glance reviving every faded flower,  
 The young loves lurking in thy laughing train;  
 While many a fairy joy and smiling hour  
 Chase the dark withered crones, *Despair* and *Pain*.

## VII.

Oh ! then return, fair queen of visions gay,  
 And wrap me in thy wild delusive dream;  
 Melt my froze spirits with thy genial ray,  
 And tinge life's gathering cloud with *one* bright beam.

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 LETTER XV.

You are certainly an admirable preacher of two-and-twenty; and follow up your subject through all its ramifications, consequences, and effects, with the logical accuracy of a profound dialectician: but "there is a time for all things" (as we find in Holy Writ), and unfortunately your letter reached me in that critical period, which, of all the cycles in the calendar, was positively the very worst for its reception. In short, I was in the act of reading a letter from Olivia; notwithstanding, however, I perused yours with the most reverential respect for the sage head which dictated it, and which certainly was dropped in a mistake by some of nature's clumsy

clumsy workmen on the shoulders of the gayest hearted young fellow in the world—instead of being quietly placed upon the neck of an Indian Bramin, a Chinese Mandarin, or a saint of the Carthusian order. The fact is, I believe you do anticipate your canonization by a century, and have already chosen your place in the Album Sanctorum of self-denying spirits. For my own part, when I seek my apotheosis, let me find it in the eyes of such a woman as Olivia; and then, by the finger of St. Maxima (who, by the by, was one of the prettiest little saints that ever gaced the calendar), I would not envy the *first* on the list of martyrology.

Seriously, however, have no fears for me. I have often said to you, that I stood half way between Shaftesbury and Hobbes; neither thinking so well of human nature as the former, nor so badly as the latter; but I believe that every human being has a certain measure of reason bestowed on him, which, if not obstructed by the prejudices of education, or debilitated in deficiency of exertion, is sufficient to guide its possessor in that path which Providence has destined him to walk through life. You know that hitherto I have not “wrapt my talent up in a napkin,” and the arguments with which the *solicitude* of friendship has furnished you, arise rather from  
your

your affectionate fears than from your experience of my frailty, in a situation almost similar. How you applauded the mastery I obtained over my first love—my passion for my sweet pensive Languedocian nun! yet you tremble for the cold Platonic connexion I am forming with Olivia—the tender, faithful mistress of another. In any other light I have never dared, perhaps never wished, to consider her: but because I am not to encourage *one* sentiment, am I therefore to be excluded from the indulgence of *every other*? I would aspire to the happiness of Olivia's friendship, and in obtaining that I should be insensible to the deficiency of a more tender tie. But you will ask me if I can long support such an intercourse with impunity, or if I am such a Xenocrates in friendship and in love, as to be capable of discerning the almost imperceptible line which divides them, where the object of the former is possessed of every attraction to excite the latter. It is true, I am not much conversant in the doctrine of the modification of the passions, and I am but too subject to be borne away by their impetuous influence, to be able to pause on their nature and attributes; but of this I am certain, not only from internal conviction but self-bought experience, that a tendency to love, when opposed in its  
earliest



earliest progress by reason and impossibility, may be moderated into a sentiment, calm yet elevated; which may interest the heart, without intoxicating the senses; which may engage the mind, without absorbing the faculties. No more, therefore, my dear friend, of your warnings and apprehensions; for whatever may be the result of my conduct, I feel that I am influenced in it by an impulse stronger infinitely than my power to resist, or your argument to oppose it.

I send you a copy of Olivia's letter, and a little poem that accompanied it; but for the letter itself, I would not part with it, though the Jesuits of Lyons were to give me their voluminous Chinese history, written in the Chinese character, in exchange.

Adieu, my young philosopher; I too am going to philosophize—but it is according to Montaigne's system, who makes enjoyment the primary principle of true philosophy. We all dine at the Abbey to-day—I shall certainly put your letter in my pocket, lest danger should press too closely on me, and I shall oppose your phalanx of arguments to the least of Olivia's smiles. I almost envy you so sweet an antagonist.



## LETTER XVI.

THE scenery which surrounds Desmond Abbey, and the views it commands, are bold, various, and picturesque: several noble ruins, where

“ Many a saint and many a hero trod,”

give them a moral interest; and taste seems to have guided the hand of time in disposing of those

“ ————Bold feudal forms  
That fancy loves to gaze on.”

They have awakened the imitative and latent talent that is was once my delight to cultivate: I fly from the restraint of a school-room, the common-place topics of my Lord's drinking-table, and my Lady's drawing-room, where, in the words of Voltaire,

“ On fait tristement grand chere  
Sans dire—et sans ecouter rien,  
Tandis que l'hebeté vulgaire  
Vous assiege—Vous considere  
Et croit voir le souverain bien.”

I fly to the environs of Desmond Abbey, and, amidst the “redundance of its funeral shades,” resign myself to that soft and delicious melancholy to which the tone of my mind and feelings is best adapted.

Sometimes

Sometimes the result of my rambles is a tribute to the local affection and national pride of the worthy owner of these picturesque scenes; by whom, and by his charming grand-daughter, I am sometimes caught seated on the fragment of a rock, with my port-folio on my knees. Nothing can be more acceptable to Sir Patrick than these little sketches; nothing can be more grateful to me than the tasteful critiques and smiles of approbation they extort from Olivia. I generally accompany them back to the tea-table, to which a pressing invitation is never wanting; and to confess the truth, since I have found this to be the case, I frequently contrive to fix myself in the path they are most likely to take in their evening walk. This certainly gives a sameness to my views; but I strive to make up for want of variety by unusual accuracy of style and glow of colouring. By the pleasant association of ideas this circumstance produces, the declining sun is to me the most grateful object in the creation; and when his departing rays tinge the mountains with purple and gold, and the windows of the Abbey are illumined with his beams, adieu to cares, languor, and anxiety; the bird, whose lively carol is awakened by his renovating light, is not more gay,

gay, more light-hearted, than I am as I watch the departure of his glories.

Yesterday evening I met Olivia and her grandfather walking, and returned to the Abbey with them. After tea, when the old gentleman was at chess with the parson, who dropt in, and I was leaning on the back of Olivia's chair at the piano-forte, the picture of my lovely and once beloved nun slipped from the riband with which it was fastened round my neck, and fell at Olivia's feet. Before I had time to pick it up she had done so : as it is drawn in the habit of the order, Olivia almost started as she gazed on it ; I thought too she changed colour : after a moment's silence she turned round, and with a smile, arch beyond all conception, said, " If the fervour of your devotion rises in proportion to the beauty of your tutelar saint, I pronounce you to be as worthy of the triple crown as any candidate that ever sent a longing sigh from the conclave to the Vatican :—here, indeed, is the ' beauty of ' holiness ; ' and surely truths divine must have come mended from those lips. Beautiful lips ! if you could articulate, what strange instances of enthusiastic piety might you not relate !"—" And you, my sly apostrophizing friend, look as if you would evocate the patron deity to betray her votarist To confess the truth, however, like

many other capricious devotees, who, in a fit of pettishness, discard their saints, I have given mine, long since, her *congé*; and in the interregnum of conscience offer up a promiscuous prayer, and light my taper at every shrine I meet; and I have long worn this little *Agnus Dei* rather from habit, than conviction of its infallibility."

Olivia looked at me doubtingly, and said, "As love sometimes borrows the language of devotion, and devotion sometimes that of love, why may not the objects be also commutable?"

"This was exactly, my fair inquisitor, the case in point; my saint *was* my mistress—but the frigid perfection of the one chilled the ardour the other inspired; and as my reverence increased for the *devotée*, my passion diminished for the woman, until love, weary of the cowl and scapular, extinguished his torch at the shrine of religion."—"Now I love this open-hearted ingenuity from my soul," said Olivia, with *naïveté*; "but there still lingers a spark in the eye of this fair nun to work a greater miracle than all the consecrated relics in her convent: perhaps, too, she was the object of your first love!"—"She was; but the shock was electric, lively, and transient."—"Then you do not place implicit faith in the infallibility of first love?"—"On the contrary, I am a perfect infidel."

infidel.”—“ Upon what principle ?”—  
 “ Upon one which I have gathered from experience. Passion, in the youthful heart, before the character is unfolded, or its sensibilities matured, may be considered as a simple sensation of nature, **unenriched** by those superadded ideas which constitute its purer and more elevated charms. Other sentiments mingle with love, as inferior metals amalgamate with gold: the blandishments of the imagination, the graces of intellectual excellence, the exaggerations of fancy glowing with poetical images, and the refinement of taste to apply them to the object beloved; all these faculties heighten and sublimiate our tenderness; and, while they increase its influence, give it a permanency to which the vague and indefinite desires of the first dawn of the passions in early life are inimical. But why talk to you on the subject ?—One line from the little sonnet, ‘ To first Love,’ on the window of the fishing-house, would overthrow all I have been impiously advancing against its omnipotence.”

Olivia had listened to me with an animated, yet profound attention; but at my last observation she raised her eyes to mine, blushed, grew pale, blushed again, and turning round to the instrument, struck a few low notes, and seemed insensibly to fall into a reverie. It is al-

most a solecism to say (and yet it is admissible too), that the soul which appears in the looks and air of this woman, is a strong proof in favour of materialism; for, like the mistress of Suckling, "one might almost say her body thought." In the course of the evening she took occasion to ask me, when I had seen the fishing-house; and when I told her with what sentiments I had made a pilgrimage to her little *Santa Casa*, and that my esteem and admiration for her were almost intuitive, she gave me her hand, and, with an endearing smile, said, "I must not disappoint you—you could almost flatter me into excellence."

I did not intend to have mentioned Olivia to you, this month; yet here she is a full-length portrait. Well, after all, let us say, with the apostle, "We trust we have a good conscience;" but lest you should suspect *I* have none, I will bid you  
Adieu.

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## LETTER XVIII.

REJOICE with me, my dear friend. I am writing to you from my Alhambra, my earthly Paradise. I am the guest of  
Sir

Sir Patrick Desmond—of Olivia; and three whole delicious weeks are allotted me to claim that title, which I would not exchange for that of the Dalai Lama of Great Thibet. The Colonel has put off his journey to Ireland for some weeks; in consequence of which, Lord and Lady L——, with all their family, are gone to pay a visit to her Ladyship's father. I was not even asked to accompany them; and I was hugging myself in the expected emancipation from my chains, when Sir Patrick Desmond, who learnt the circumstance (how, I know not), came himself with an invitation, as cordial as it was welcome; and I accompanied him hither, with an heart as willing as “bondage ere to freedom;” but not before my Lady had remarked to me, that she was happy I had made myself so agreeable to the old gentleman by my talents, for he was much flattered by the views I had taken of his place; that she did not doubt but he might serve me materially; and that I was right always to have my own interest in view.” My Lord was, no doubt, of the same opinion; and these people, who were evidently at a loss in what manner to account for this worthy man's predilection in my favour, by revolving every circumstance in their own narrow system, have

at last fancied they trace its source in interest and vanity. "The little soul is like a vapour, that hovers round the marshy lake, which never rises on the green hill, lest the winds meet it there \*."

The Colonel is not expected for some weeks, and how long will they be flying by? But away with anticipation! I am awakened to a new sense of being; its term may be transient, but it shall be worth an age of monotonous existence. I am become an Epicurean upon principles the most refined and systematic; I am already restored to that happy alchemy of mind, which turns even the dross of life to gold; I have flung away the smoked glass, through which I glanced at nature, and view her now only through the vivid colouring of a prism: like a child, I shall live only for the present; the past and future shall be equally lost to me; and I shall resign myself to a series of pleasing and delicious emotions, which shall gently agitate the heart, without fatiguing the mind; which shall awaken the senses, without satiating them.

\* Ossian.



## LETTER XIX.

THERE is a small apartment, in a remote wing of this vast Gothic mansion, fitted up in the most tasteful style of simple elegance, and furnished with books, music, drawing materials, &c. Having discovered this temple of taste by mere chance, and guessing the votarist who worshipped in it, I stole there the other morning after breakfast, when I knew she was busied in domestic concerns, and that Sir Patrick was engaged with his steward. Never did I pass a more delightful hour; a common-place book, that lay open on the writing desk, attracted my eye: it seemed the repository of those impulsive effusions of mind, which, without possessing the critical correctness that marks premeditated composition, have always an originality which excites interest and fascinates attention. I could not be mistaken in the supposition, for in the first page I turned over was a faded rose-leaf; under it was written: "Seated between my beloved parents, at the close of a June evening, 17—, I placed this rose-leaf here. Beautiful emblem of my sweet and transient bliss! time may spare you as a memento of past happiness, and suffer you to live a little longer than your destined

period of fragile existence; but when decay shall reach the freshness of your blush, may your fragrance survive your bloom, like the remembrance of those faded emotions to which my heart was alive, when I placed you here!" To this simple apostrophe of filial tenderness succeeded a thousand delightful ideas, in which elegance of taste, chastity of thought, and the most playful vein of fancy, mingled and combined their graces, and gave me a more perfect insight into the character of this charming woman, than I should probably have obtained on the acquaintance of an age. While I was thus pleasingly engrossed, I heard a light footstep approaching the room: a thief caught in the very fact, could not have felt more consternation; I snatched up a pencil and paper, and seemed busily employed. Olivia entered, and started at finding her room so occupied; but seeing me very earnestly engaged, and appearing not to notice her entrance, she took up a book, and retired on tiptoe. When we met, she took no notice of the circumstance; and, encouraged by her silence, I made a second and third invasion, always bringing my port-folio with me, and placing myself in a window which commanded a prospect she had frequently heard me admire. At first she absented herself,

on the plea of not disturbing me; but finding me perfectly harmless, apparently indifferent to her presence, and deeply engaged with my drawing, she yesterday sat down to her harp to practise. Too soon did she force me to lay aside the part I had assumed; the pencil dropt from my hand, and my eyes, my whole soul, my every sense became fastened on my dangerous hostess. The position in which she sat, gave me only a glimpse of her profile—its expression was divine; the half-recumbent attitude of her form was full of grace; but the impassioned sensibility that trembled in her round and mellow voice, the air she sung, and the words to which she adapted it, were to me a thousand times more bewitching than even grace and beauty; and, unable to resist the force of my feelings, I sprung from my seat, snatched her hand from the strings, and in a moment of delirium pressed it to my lips. Her confusion and amazement restored me to myself. “Forgive me,” said I; “you must forgive me! There is a style of melody, when the mind is of a certain tone, adapted to words over which the heart dissolves, to which every fine sense vibrates in unison, and sung with an expression that speaks the rapt soul of the enchanting musician, against which I am not a proof; then I

am borne away ; and the extravagance of my actions is but too frequently proportioned to the excess of my emotion."

"Certainly," said she, resuming her usual ease, and withdrawing her hand which I still retained, "I can forgive those emotions, to which I am myself too frequently the victim : to me, they are the most grateful and flattering homage that can be paid ; for if there are few, who are alive to exquisite feeling, there are not many endowed with the capability of exciting it."

"And in you, my charming friend, are united these delightful faculties, in a degree more eminent than I ever met with in any one being."

"Ah, flatterer ! but it is the song, and not the songstress, that has awakened these raptures : the air is indeed composed in the true tone of passion and sentiment ; and the influence such music holds over the mind of the auditor, will always be proportioned to the strength of genius and chastity of taste by which it is endowed. The man of genius only dares deviate from the path of fashion and custom ; and while the niceties, the intricacies of complicated harmony, please the musician, the heart of feeling and the soul of taste swell to the inspiration of melody and nature. But come ; I fear I am insensibly leading  
you

you back to that frenzy of enthusiasm you so lately deplored ; but I must sing this little song again for you, and convert the poison into an antidote."

"No, Olivia, do not sing for me ; I dare not listen again 'to the voice of the charmer ;' but the words, I am sure, are your own composition ; will you have the goodness to repeat them?" She immediately complied : they ran as follows :

### STANZAS.

#### I.

THE glowing heart that seeks its kindred heart,  
Beats slow and languid through the listless hours ;  
Still vainly anxious seeks its dearer part,  
And droops, to try its fond and latent pow'rs.

#### II.

Each nerve, each fibre, delicate, refin'd—  
No common object can bestow the treasure ;  
It seeks a kindred soul, a kindred mind,  
To mingle intellect with ev'ry pleasure.

#### III.

Ah ! sensate heart ! how hard to form the tie  
That can exalt thee to a state divine ;  
When glance replies to glance, and sigh to sigh,  
And every throbbing pulse beats true to thine !

Her song was a thousand times less dangerous than her sentiments. The voice, the look with which they were uttered ! She

must have read all that passed within my mind as I leaned on her harp, silent and overwhelmed; for I was no longer alone agitated, alone confused; it was a moment the most distressing, the most delightful of my life. Olivia rose to retire in silent emotion: as she passed me, a flower dropped from her bosom; a moment before her head had drooped over it; a tear glittered on its leaf; it could not have been dew, for it was a faded rose, and there was nothing fresh about it, but the precious drop that embalmed it. I remember to have seen in a Benedictine convent at Vendome a relic which raised a considerable revenue to its possessors, from the superstitious devotion that was paid to it; it was a crystal vial, presented by an angel to Mary Magdalen, and supposed to have contained the tear dropped by her divine Reformer to the memory of his departed friend. The allusion may be profane; but my faded rose-leaf, wet with the tear of genius and sensibility, is to me what the sacred vial is to the monks of St. Benedict; from a motive less devout, I confess, in *one* sense, but certainly more disinterested in *another*.

## LETTER XX.

I ENVY not the fabled bliss of the Hyperboreans, with their ten centuries of spring, youth, health, and happiness; my full heart is inaccessible even to a wish, and the happiness in which it revels is independent of increase, from the contrasted satisfaction of others, the retrospect of past sufferings, or the anxiety of future expectations. One sentiment wholly possesses me, throbs in every pulse, animates every sense, and gives to my rapturous moments all the soul of life. In the morning I awake from a delicious dream of bliss and of Olivia; my heart's light throb heaves with the delight of beholding her; the next moment I am at her side, and I contrive, by a thousand little artifices, to preserve my enviable station for the greater part of the day. The attractive force of congenial feeling draws from the mutual mind the mutual sentiment. Hour flies rapidly after hour, and the period of their transient existence is only marked by the transition from one delightful sensation to another. Youth, beauty, music, and poetry, all the witchery of sympathy, and all the powers of sensibility, unite their blandishments to seduce the heart and intoxicate the senses:  
and

and if they involve the soul in a fleeting delusion, it is a delusion worth all the reality of dull plodding life and cold common-place emotion.

I fear I torment you by my letters; for I find I have very few of a great many covers left me by Lord L——. The fact is, a heart intoxicated with its own happiness unbosoms itself where, and as often as it can; it multiplies its enjoyments by repetition, and gratifies that smiling principle, inherent in every generous breast, that of sharing the happiness it feels. My precious relic, my rose, continues in high preservation, and, as I have stopped its pores, may do so for a series of time.

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## LETTER XXI.

Nothing can be more delightful than what I term the intimate society of Desmond Abbey: it is formed of a few pleasing, unaffected women; consisting chiefly of the parish rector's wife and daughters, and the family of a man of taste and letters, who has retired hither upon economical motives. They are neither very handsome nor very brilliant, and happily destitute of that fashionable jargon of accomplishments which annoys you so much in  
the



the misses of *haut-ton*. Some of them are well-informed, some of them musical, and all amiable, lively, and good-humoured; looking up to my all-superior Olivia, with an admiration almost amounting to idolatry, but perfectly free from envy; and indeed I believe they are the only women who know her, who do not hate her for that superiority they cannot fail to feel. The men who are the most in the *en-famille* with us, are a few officers of an English regiment quartered in the next garrison town: they are men of taste, information, and very superior manners (and I must confess to you, in my eyes but too pleasing and too insinuating). There is certainly not a wit amongst us; and our conversation, exempt from that gladiatorial exertion of colloquial skill, which is always embittered by the gall of rivalry, and degraded by the hatred of superiority, is easy, desultory, and animated; abounding with that candid intercourse of sentiments and opinions which, in my mind, forms one of the most refined pleasures of society. In such society the heart and spirits repose; and if the greater faculties of the mind lie dormant, a thousand little nameless pleasures that flow from taste, feeling, fancy, and vivacity, are awakened into existence. The great principle that animates our little club is cheerfulness;

“ without

“ without the enforcement of which,” says Sterne, “ the Thirty-nine Articles are incomplete.” We write bad verses, pronounce extempore epigrams on each other, compose pasquinades, and even sometimes descend to riddles and charades, at which I am become wonderfully expert, and have already ransacked the four elements for my *firsts*, my *seconds*, and my *toutes*. Amidst, however, these trifling effusions of careless amusement are sometimes produced some elegant ideas elegantly realized; and the poetical fragments of the sly Olivia, by the exquisite selection of the thoughts, and musical composition of the verse, do equal honour to her taste and judgment, and are evidently written to extort something more than the frolic smile, which we all look up to as the reward of our less studied and less polished productions. How I love these “ *riens naïfs et pleins de grace*,” which, in the bosom of an agreeable leisure, enable us to gaily “ play the trifle life away !” It is certain there are very few who know how to live ! The *petits soupers* of the celebrated Madame de Martel Fontaine\*, if more brilliant, were not more delightful than Olivia’s; then she appears in the happiest of her phases, and

\* Celebrated by Voltaire and others, for the freedom, elegance, and gaiety of her entertainments.

there is sometimes a vein of arch playfulness in her manner, as might shame the laughing air of an Euphrosyne.

I am told, that though she has not diminished the hospitable propensities of her grandfather, she has taught them to flow in a better channel; and that the society of the Abbey is more discriminate, more select, though scarcely less numerous, since she has presided as its mistress. It is certain, that indiscriminate hospitality is the virtue of an uncivilized people, and while it apparently breathes the very spirit of philanthropy, originates most frequently in self-love. The mind, unaccustomed to commune with itself, barren of ideas, and void of reflection, is thrown wholly dependant on society for occupation and engagement, and adopts every species of social and familiar intercourse, which by opposing that vacillation of intellect, against which human nature (except in her most imbecile state) revolts, relieves it from the dreadful oppression of the *tedium vitæ*:—hence the indiscriminate hospitality of savage nations, and even of the less refined inhabitants of the most polished states. The Brehon laws of the ancient Irish forbade the breaking up of a sept too suddenly, lest the traveller might be disappointed of his expected entertainment; and many traces of this hospitable

pitiable spirit are still to be found among the modern Irish of every description, and too often to the prejudice of their circumstances, constitution, and minds; for a national custom which would be sometimes "more honoured in the breach than the observance," frequently leads to an extravagance that involves them in pecuniary difficulties, while the excesses of which it is productive, are equally detrimental to the health; and it is certain, that amidst the boundless freedom of convivial jocularities, and the unrestrained enjoyments of social intercourse, the mind and manners must lose in refinement, what the passions acquire in strength and vehemence. The society of his granddaughter is daily rendering Sir Patrick Desmond independent of every other. Her conversation, full of variety and anecdote, can accommodate itself to every understanding that does not fall short of mediocrity: modest and unassuming, her cheek frequently blushes at the superiority her lips confer; rather playfully arch than witty, and fascinating than brilliant. In energy of expression, and persuasive tenderness in sentimental observation, she stands, in my opinion, unequalled and unrivalled: her talents, rather versatile than individually striking, give that variety to her character which is most grateful to the caprice

of our nature; and the sensibility of her warm heart, and the vivacity of her temper, bestow that facility on her manners which renders her ease infectious to the most formal; the restraint of uncongenial society throws her from herself, and the fear of meriting the title of a learned lady, renders her more anxious at times to conceal her superiority, than other women are to display theirs. But she still always retains a *magic something* in her air, her manner, analogous to those graces in *moral virtue* which set the line of *ethic* rule at defiance, to the *je ne sçais quoi* in personal beauty, which description cannot express.

Happily there are but few Olivias, or the power of woman would become as dangerous from intellectual influence, as it is now from personal attraction. I have always observed, in the course of my little reading, that those women who governed the hearts and understandings of men with the most unbounded sway, owed their power less to the witchery of beauty and the charm of youth, than to strength of mind and cultivation of talents. Aspasia\* was no longer young, when Socrates became her disciple, and imbibed the principles of the *philosophia amatoria* at her

\* The Samian war was undertaken by Pericles at the instigation of Aspasia.

feet, and when Athens was governed by her decrees through the medium of Pericles. Corinna, of whose talents we read so much, and of whose beauty we know so little, presided over the studies, as well as the heart of Pindar. The abilities of Catherine raised her from a cottage to a throne. Maintenon, in the decline of life, had more power over the heart and councils of Louis the Fourteenth, than La Valliere in all the attractions of youth, or Montespan in all the splendour of beauty; and if we are to credit the assertions of Dio, the only gallantry the voice of scandal could lay to the charge of Cicero, was his attachment and literary correspondence with Cæsellia, a female wit, and a philosopher of seventy: and this, I believe, is bringing as strong an argument in favour of my position as could be desired. A woman merely beautiful may attract; a woman merely accomplished may amuse, and both united may produce a transient fascination; but it is sense and virtue only that fasten on the mind: if to these precious qualities are added a certain refinement and elegance of taste, and a certain delicacy and elevation of sentiment united to animation of temper and softness of manners, the power of their possessor becomes altogether irresistible; it is acknowledged by the heart, it is ratified by the

under-

understanding, and it exalts every delight the senses can bestow. I always thought this, but I can now aver it from a sweet, but, I fear, a fatal experience !

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## LETTER XXII.

THOSE infant prejudices in favour of Sir Patrick Desmond, which marked the first period of our acquaintance, are hourly ripening into maturity. He has failings—and who has not?—but they are of that description which ever meet with indulgence from society; because they neither originate in narrow principles nor an ungenerous mind; for I have observed, that those errors which can be traced to such a source, though less destructive in their effects on mankind than those which originate in a boundless spirit and vehement passions, ever find less toleration. “Vices,” says Plato, “as well as virtues, are great in great minds.” Happily the natural bent of my own taste coincides with his most favourite pursuits; and as I am hourly becoming, in some degree, more necessary to him, the tie which binds us is of mutual force. I love to listen to, and he to repeat, his old traditional stories; I love them from a twofold motive, for they procure



cure me many hours of that society, which I could not otherwise enjoy without exciting suspicion even in the breast of the most unsuspicious of all human beings ; for while “ he hums the song of other times,” and talks of the “ sunbeams of other days, and the delights of the heroes of old,” I am suffered to trifle at Olivia’s work-table, hang on the back of her chair, or assist her in the drawing. Sometimes, when we are alone, we ramble out in the evenings, Olivia leaning on her grandfather’s arm, and he on mine. I am always supplied with pencil and paper. A ruin, to which many an oral tale is attached, and

“ On the top whereof aye dwells the ghastly owl,  
Shrieking his baleful note,”

strikes our eyes : I am immediately set to work. The old gentleman (who is not wholly free from a superstition, which the liveliness of his imagination, even at three-score, is well adapted to nourish) repeats the various tales of its being still the haunt of “ witches and ghosts who rove at midnight hour,” or digresses into the history of its former lords ; generally concluding with an emphatic shake of the head, and a melancholy apostrophe from Ossian ; “ why dost thou build the hall, son of the winged days ? thou lookest from thy tower to-day, yet a few years, and the blast of



the desert shall come; it howls in thy empty court, and whistles round thy half-worn shield." Olivia sometimes seats herself on a broken fragment with a book, but oftener laughs heartily at us both, defaces a Gothic window by a sly touch of the elbow, or razes the whole structure by running away with my paper, or jerking my pencil out of my fingers. The old gentleman smiles and chides by turns; and we all return home in the best spirits, and with the best appetite in the world, to a little music and an early supper. "I liked you," said he to me the other night, "at first for your father's sake, and now for your own."—"And for whose sake am I to like you?" said Olivia archly. Ah! the sorceress! I sometimes think she is determined on my destruction. This morning I was leaning in a musing posture on her piano-forte; she tapped me gently on the shoulder; "What are you thinking of so earnestly, my good friend?"—"Of you."—"Of me! Oh! then I will run away, that you may think of me again."—"And is your absence requisite for that, Olivia?"—"Why, I have somewhere read of a river in Greece which illuminated a torch when held at a moderate distance, but extinguished it on a nearer approach."—"I understand your allusion; you think a short absence favourable to love."—"To love!

love! Were we talking of love?"—"I was thinking of it."—"You said you were thinking of me."—"You are synonymous."

I would have given a thousand worlds to have retracted my folly. She turned from me without answering, but not till I observed her smiles had vanished, her colour fled, and the most pensive gravity had taken possession of her features; "yet it was a countenance more in sorrow than in anger," as if she lamented my weakness, rather than resented my temerity. We did not meet till dinner; and, for the first time, I rejoiced that our little circle was enlarged by a crowd of company. She speaks of her future husband with an ease that amazes me; for I well know, that, in a mind like hers, love is surrounded by all those delicate mysteries of sensitive reserve which shuns observation, and treasures the idol of its homage in the last secret recess of the heart. His name scarcely deepens the blush on her cheek, and the arrival of his letters does not seem to increase the palpitation of a single pulse: she never speaks of him as a lover, or the destined companion of her life; but as a friend whom she highly esteems; and others are delicate enough to mention him only in the same light: to me she never speaks of him, and I could almost believe she

she considers herself as the dove destined to bestow the olive-branch, without the hope of finding a resting-place for her own bosom. Ah! my dear friend, what a train of reflections (dangerous reflections!) does this supposition awaken!

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### LETTER XXIII.

LORD and Lady L—— came home yesterday, and I am returned to my Siberia, my Kamtschatka; in short, I am no longer under the same roof with Olivia; and I now feel how possible it is to hold an existence only in the being of another! I counted every moment as it fled during my last week's residence at the Abbey; it was a wretched calculation, and every increase of my calendar was made with a sigh, as heart-felt as that the captive heaves when he notches on his stick the expiration of each day's misery! You would laugh at me, did you know what I suffered at parting, though only separated from her by three short miles. She walked with her grandfather to the end of the avenue with me; then the old gentleman gave me his hand, and pressed mine with a cordiality to which it has been long a stranger: Olivia too held out hers to me with a smile;

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yet,

yet, I thought, with a look tender and melancholy: "In love's hours," said she, "it has been said there are many days, but I feel that friendship reverses the maxim."

"Then how must I feel?" said I.

"Why," said the Baronet, "as one, I hope, who is sensible of sufficient regret at leaving us, to induce him frequently to be our guest." Here we parted, and how I performed the rest of my little journey I know not. The family of L—— received me with that courteous civility which seems purely the effect of habitual politeness, equally independent of sentiment or intention. Oh! the vast difference between that civil attention, which is merely the result of what is termed good breeding, and that cordial effusion of kindness, which flows from the warm impulses of a kind heart! Never did the contrast strike me more forcibly.

I have received your letter, and judged its import before I opened it. You triumph in the realization of your prophecy: my friendship is converted into a passion, impetuous and ardent as my nature, and you moralize and philosophize admirably on the consequences that may ensue; but your morality is too refined, and your philosophy too dogmatic; my understanding has preached to my heart a thousand times

times as you have done, and to the same purpose :

——“ Hang up philosophy ;  
Unless philosophy can make a Juliet,  
It helps not, it prevails not.”

Poor Romeo ! I am at present contented to be of his school, and leave you to embrace the stoic, academic, peripatetic, or any other system you please.

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## LETTER XXIV.

FROM OLIVIA.

WHERE are you, my good friend ? and why do we not see you at the Abbey ? Is there not some little artifice in this ? You would teach us the value of your society, by its loss. In love's theory the precept may be admissible, and a woman (like a Chinese Emperor) may involve herself in mysterious retirement, to secure the homage of her vassals ; but coquetry in friendship is more intolerable than ostentation in religion ! The truth is, therefore, you are grown as indolent as a Turk, I had almost said as stupid. Here is the piano-forte just as you left it, without a string—Apropos, borrow some German wire from Lady L——, and put it in your pocket

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when

when you come over. Here too is the half-finished plan of the grotto, in as rough and wild a state as the most savage fancy could design it; and I have not looked into Gottsched since you left us. In short, you make yourself so useful an animal, that I hourly find "I could have better spared a better man." I send you all your books, except Haller.

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## LETTER XXV.

TO OLIVIA.

AM I indeed the worthless fellow you describe me, or do you imagine, "I run away upon instinct, like Falstaff from the shadow of impending danger? Alas! instinct has never so befriended me, and, like many others, I am but too apt to "meet my death by looking on my life." The truth is, I have been three times at the Abbey, without being able to get a glimpse of you: yesterday I entered the fishing-house in less than an hour after you had left it (as the gardener told me) with a party of ladies; and twice you were visiting at the Castle, when I, in all the pettishness of disappointment, was wandering about the grounds of Desmond. Thus, my charming friend, for this week  
back

back we have been like two lines in mathematical certainty, which may continue to approximate *ad infinitum*, without ever coming into contact ; and the comparison might be admissible in a sense more extensive than that to which it is at present applied. No, I hate coquetry in friendship, as much as you possibly can ; nor am I sufficiently endowed with self-denial to refine upon its enjoyment by a voluntary sequestration from its object : it is however certain, that temporary removals heighten and exalt the fervour of every attachment, whether of love, friendship, or collateral affection ; and I may say with great truth, that I am never more with you, my amiable friend, than when absent from you ; and yet it is not being with you either, for your idea is so closely interwoven with every thought of my soul, that I feel it rather like an innate than a naturalized principle ; and my mind has no longer the power to dissolve the connexion, even if my wishes led to the separation. To-morrow the family of L—— dine with one of your chieftains, and I shall fly to my Alhambra ; then the grotto shall be finished, the piano-forte shall be strung, Gottsched shall be read, and I shall be Olivia's very prudent friend ; in spite of her song, her harp, and even the sly smile that creates

the little dimple on the left side of the little mouth.

I send you a fragment, which you have a right to see ; since thinking on some transient, blissful hours I had spent in your society gave rise to the reflections that occasioned it.

# FRAGMENT.

## I.

YE tender, bitter recollections, spare me ;  
 Avaunt, ye shadowy spirits of bliss and sorrow ;  
 Why, cruel, dear intruders, ever near me ?  
 Haply my joy to-day, my woe to-morrow.

## II.

For every blessing your possession gave me  
 Leaves in its absence still a kindred sorrow ;  
 Ye lov'd, yet fear'd intruders, leave, ah ! leave me,  
 For if you bless to-day, you wound to-morrow.

## III.

Thus the wild fading rose in pale decay,  
 Dew gemm'd its head, reclin'd in seeming sorrow ;  
 Yet though its blushing honours die to-day,  
 Its poignant thorns shall live and wound to-mor-  
 row.



## LETTER XXVI.

FROM OLIVIA.

AH pilferer ! return me my manuscript, or judge the vengeance of the whole Parnassian legion : I did not miss it till this morning, when I was looking over my *porte-feuille*, for your drawing from Ossian. Apropos, there is too much *gaieté de cœur* in the countenance of Malvina. Do you know it has a strong likeness of your little friend ? even the parson detected the resemblance. “ This has too much of your Euphrosyne air,” said he to me, “ to be characteristic of the pensive Malvina.” Grandpapa desires I will request you to come over to us this evening. A peasant has found some old coin amidst the rubbish of a ruin in the neighbourhood ; grandpapa is quite elated, and you must come and share the triumph *da virtuosa*. You shall have coffee in the fishing-house, and I have ordered the harp there. I feel an elasticity of mind, and a flow of spirits to-day, for which I cannot account. This is a certain species of happiness, independent of every external gratification, to which I am frequently subject, and is one of the most lively enjoyments which Providence has annexed to my being.

Come not therefore to me with your grave  
face and pensive air,

“ Like one well studied in sad ostent,  
To please his grand-dam.”

The laughing graces of Desmond would  
take flight at the appearance of the sombre  
vision.

“ On est heureux des qu'on est sage,”

says the Cardinal de Bernis; but I reverse  
the maxim in my present disposition, and  
believe that “ we are wise when we are  
happy.” This evening in my little Tus-  
culum\*, (as you call the fishing-house),  
you shall see my philosophy is not merely  
speculative!—What say you to becoming  
my disciple? Remember I stipulate for  
smiles! but none of your Cassius-like  
smiles, as if you “ scorned your spirit,  
that could be moved to smile at any thing.”  
You often smile in this manner; and in-  
deed too frequently in general society re-  
verse the golden rule of

“ Volto sciolto, *pensieri stretti*.”

\* The favourite retreat of Tully.

## LETTER XXVII.

TO OLIVIA.

I FLY to you, my charming friend; I fly to meet you at your little Tusculum. Friendship has not in the world, nor love in Cnidus or Paphos, a more delightful asylum, a retreat more formed for the enjoyment of tender emotions, or tender sighs. But, alas! it is my wishes only that have taken wing; four hours, four heavy hours, must steal away with lazy pace, before I behold you or Tusculum.

Is my portrait of Malvina indeed like you? This has happened with two or three others I have lately done: how is it to be accounted for? I think it was Simon Martina, who was so impressed with the beauty of Laura, that all his female pictures resembled her;—dare I draw any allusion? Adieu, my sweet friend, my amiable sister! for I may at least claim an affinity to you on the side of soul; and that, in my opinion, is a stronger, closer relationship, than any to be found in nature's catalogue of collateral connexions.

I had almost forgot to promise you that I would leave my grave face and pensive air at the castle of L——; and that I

would come to you, with all the *vivida vis animæ* I could muster.

Am I not a greater thief than an Arab? You shall however have a copy of your manuscript

“ Spirits are finely touch’d,  
But to fine issue :”

And the unusual flow of vivacity that animates yours, is, I hope, but the laughing anticipation of impending joys : I am selfish enough to wish, that they may light on you, under a thousand delightful forms, this evening ; and then the chance of a participation may be mine. Ah ! how delightful

“ De parler, sur la fin du jour,  
De vers, de musique et d’amour !”

The last word might have been omitted, for it renders the quotation inapplicable—do you erase it. Once more adieu. My adieus are like a preface to a second volume ; and yet,

“ What have I gain’d by this one minute more ?  
Only to wish another and another.”

## LETTER XXVIII.

TO OLIVIA.

GIVE me no more such little festivals, my charming friend, or dread the consequences. The very air of your Tusculum was infectious, and diffused its delicious poison through my whole frame. Never were you truly yourself until last night: the fire of your vivacity was moderated by a thousand touching graces; the animation of your manner was tempered by the most insinuating softness; you blushed more frequently than usual, but it was the blush of pleasure, chastened by sentiment; and the lively glow, that diffused itself over your smiling countenance, spoke the sensibility of the heart from whence it flowed; you sung, and my soul hung upon every note that sighed its trembling melody on your lips.—I was no longer myself—I felt my danger, and I trembled for my temerity; I would have fled, but the voice of Olivia detained me. You said half audibly, and with a meaning smile, “*Il y a des rivières qui ne font jamais tant du bien, que quand elles se débordent, ainsi l’amitié n’a rien meilleur que l’excès.\**”

\* “As some rivers fertilize the banks they overflow, so in friendship there is nothing better than excess.”

BALZAC.

Ah ! sorceress, what a method did you take to moderate that excess of friendship, which had not escaped your observation ! You drew your harp to you, and sung that air, which, even in a cooler moment, I cannot hear without emotion. You triumphed in the witchcraft of your powers ; I saw you did, Olivia, and I remained overwhelmed and lost in delirium ; while Captain M——, at the other side of you, was crying “ Charming, extremely well indeed ! ” and shaking his head like a Mandarin, when he fancied he was doing it with the musical emphasis of an amateur ; and yet, Olivia, his admiration did not displease you : he is certainly a very handsome man.

How agreeable, how unaffected were your two female friends ! I think I see them at this moment, dressed at all points, seated so demurely at their netting, stealing a sly glance at the invincible Captain, tossing up their heads when caught in the very fact, and tittering and simpering so prettily when he addressed them. Then the form of Olivia presents itself, bending gracefully over her harp. That dress too, so simple, yet so artfully contrived to set off the symmetry of her form ! what a head presented itself when the straw hat was thrown by ! The two fair sisters nodded  
their

their high plumes at each other, and seemed to say, "This is looking very charming, at a very easy rate." Your grandfather (poor man!) seemed enraptured with you, and never in my eyes did your attentions to him appear less obvious, yet more touching or more interesting. Would you believe it, the hour which I devoted to my solitary walk home, was scarcely less delightful than that which I had just passed in your society. Every little circumstance that occurred, every word you uttered, floated in my mind, with all the additional glow that fancy casts upon those soothing images which memory presents to the senses and the heart. Indeed my thoughts flow always more happily on leaving you than when I am going to you, as the *train of vapour* which attends a *comet* does not betray its *lumination* until it has passed the sun. You know you often call me an *eccentral body*; so the allusion holds good. I escaped the insipid garrulity of Lady L——'s drawing-room, and retired to my own apartment, full of those emotions which set the influence of rest at defiance.

I arose with the first light that dawned through my window, and my steps involuntarily bent to the fishing-house: the Abbey bell tolled five as I entered it. Every thing was just as we had left it the  
preceding



preceding night, and the window, at which we had stood together, was still open; you had thrown up the sash, to enjoy the fragrance of the air, after a refreshing shower, whose drops, glittering on the foliage, were tinged with the beam of the setting sun. You pointed to those mountains, which, wild and desolate, bounded the horizon with their curving line: you remarked, as the sun sunk behind them, the variety of their aspect, caused by the opposite effect of light and shade. "Those mountains," said you, "immortalized by the feats of Fingal, where the bards 'sent away the night in song,' and the inspired Ossian immortalized the prowess of the hero,—do they not 'send 'back your soul to the ages of old, and the 'days of other years?' The littlenesses of the world fade into annihilation as I contemplate them; and the life by which I am so engrossed, so agitated, is reduced to the span of a moment." After a pause, you added, "It is certain, my dear friend, that there are objects in nature which speak to the heart, and are eminently calculated to purify and elevate the soul. The mild rising of the evening star;—the moon, stealing in silent majesty amidst those dark masses of vapour that cloud her progress and are silvered by her light;—the cloud-embosomed summit of a distant



a distant mountain;—and, above all, those spots where the hero ‘fell in the ‘midst of his renown,’ and the immortal mind effused those inspirations which were breathed into the soul when it was first quickened—in the moment of their contemplation, excite those sublime reflections which give us a foretaste of that eternity we were created to enjoy.”

You ceased! but the voice of the harmonious speaker still dwelt on my ear, while her sentiments were engraven on my heart, and treasured in my memory: in the mean time your fair friends were playing off all their artillery of charms against the heart of their military hero, and your grandfather was equally ardent in an engagement at the chess-board with the parson. The evening closed in: he returned to the Abbey to complete his conquest; and the Miss D——s proposed a walk by moonlight on the beach, in order to accomplish theirs. Captain M—— was enriched with the hand of each fair besieger, and you honoured me with yours; yet I thought you did it with a timidity, a reluctance, that a thousand times (if self-love would have permitted it) urged me to its resignation; and even when I did resign the light and precious burden, I felt the warmth of its impression fading on my

my arm, with a romantic regret not to be conceived.

The pensive solemnity of the hour; the sublime object which the ocean presented, whose feathery spray seemed to swell to the moon-beam that glittered on its surface, at first threw a shade over the vivacity of your manner.

“———The wind was hush’d;  
And to the beach, each slowly lifted wave,  
Creeping with silver curl, press’d, kiss’d the shore,  
And slept in peace\*.”

But your mind soon regained its wonted tone; and while I gazed on your speaking countenance, and listened to your accents, it seemed as if “eternity was in your lips and eyes.” You are never half so delightful as when in (what you term) a prattling mood. Our companions laughed, and trifled, and chatted, as in the side-box at the opera; and I could not help thinking, with a certain French author, “that it is not every one knows how to take a walk.”

I have written thus far to you, my charming friend, from your little Tusculum, with my pencil: I shall leave it in your work-bag, which is lying by me, on the window-seat, where you left it last

\* Mason’s English Garden.

night,

night, and where you will probably be the first to find it in your early walk to your favourite retreat: I leave also with it, an impromptu, occasioned by the emotions my re-entrance into this little apartment awakened. Adieu, my sweet friend! you are still reposing in the bosom of a tranquil sleep; and the fairy dreams that hover o'er your pillow, probably partake of that vivid fancy which animates you when awake: may it be a dream of bliss! and may time realize the soothing prophecy of the golden vision! I shall steal a glance at your chamber-window, as I pass it at a distance; and then return to the breakfast-table of Lady L—— “with what appetite I may.”

### FRAGMENT.

#### I.

YE soft sublime emotions of the soul,  
That erst your transports o'er my senses stole,  
And seem'd to bear  
That soul, upon your glowing joys away,  
Beyond the term of life's brief cloudy day  
Of strife and care.

#### II.

Oh! I have felt your soul-ennobling sway  
At the voluptuous hour of closing day;  
That much-lov'd hour,  
When the soft music of a plaintive song  
Stole o'er the twilight stillness sweet along,  
With thrilling pow'r.

#### III.

## III.

And as it sigh'd athwart the pensive hour,  
 Ah! not alone I felt its thrilling pow'r;  
     For, o'er my soul  
 The bright enchantment of poetic art,  
 That poetry best form'd to touch the heart,  
     From mem'ry stole.

## IV.

And soft ideas, not more soft than fleet,  
 With poetry and music mingled sweet,  
     And the soft sigh  
 Breath'd o'er the smiling lip; 'twas rapture's  
     smile;  
 And transports, glowing genuine; the tear the  
     while  
     Beam'd in the eye.

## V.

Oh tell! ye blest emotions of the soul,  
 From what delicious source the pow'r ye stole,  
     To touch the heart,  
 T'exalt each sense, and bear me thus away:  
 Oh! ye sublime and fine emotions say,  
     Whence is your art?

## VI.

And let me, when the springs of being fail,  
 On thy best joy my raptur'd soul exhale,  
     And my last sigh  
 Breathe, with the witching strain of some sweet  
     sound,  
 My heart's last throb with bliss poetic bound:  
     Thus let me die.

## LETTER XXIX.

FROM OLIVIA.

You are ill, my dear friend ; and you would conceal it from those who are most interested for you : my grandfather says your disorder is only on your spirits, and Captain M——, who has seen you, says the same. Then come to me ! You will find me the best physician in the world —my prescriptions infallible ; for they aim at the mind. In such cases, Bacon recommends a lively poem, or a cheerful prospect. Come to the Abbey then, where you shall have both ; and, still more, you shall have a song and a smile into the bargain.

To-day I was reading of Alphonso of Leon, who was cured of a dangerous illness by the pleasure he felt in reading Quintus Curtius : this made me think of you : are you not obliged to Alphonso ? Remember we shall drink coffee early this evening. Adieu, my poor invalid. Shall I not pray, with Saint Paul, “ May brotherly love continue ! ”

P. S. Was it not *Eristratus* who discovered the secret malady of *Antiochus* by comparing its symptoms with *Sappho's* description of the effects of love ? I have frequently

frequently heard you apostrophize the *spirit* of Miss D——'s large black eyes ; so be prepared for my *analyzation à la Sappho*.

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## LETTER XXX.

TO OLIVIA.

THE very promise of your song and smile has already had more effect on my disorder, than all the prescriptions Celsus or Galen ever wrote : if there is any of it yet lurking, it shall dissipate when I behold you ; and, like the serpent, who can only be seduced from its prey by the power of harmony, it shall vanish at the sound of your voice. But remember I forbid your *animal magnetism* ; my disorder shall not be *intellectually anatomized*. Trust me, my charming doctress, it were a dangerous experiment ! *Malady* and a physician, they say, appeared first together ; and perhaps my fair physician would find less difficulty in deranging my pulse, than in “ *new setting it.*”

“ There is more felicity in carrion flies,  
Than Romeo : they may seize on the white wonder  
Of dear Juliet's hand, and steal immortal blessings  
From her lips.”

Love

Love never conceived, nor poetry adorned, a more refined, a more beautiful sentiment than that ; it has occurred to me a thousand times during my few days' absence from you.

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## LETTER XXXI.

TO OLIVIA.

ONE thought you expressed yesterday evening made a lively impression on me : “ Plato mentions four species of flattery ; St. Clair seems versed in a thousand ; nor are they the less dangerous for being always oblique and indirect.” For Heaven’s sake let us understand each other. I respect both you and myself too much to descend to adulation ; it is a species of commerce that equally derogates from the dignity of both parties : if, however, there is any flattery in the case, yours was certainly the most obvious, though the most refined. In shewing me some drawings you had lately finished, you said, “ Here is one, which, however inconsequent its subject, I prize more than all the rest :” it was simply a bunch of flowers with the little motto of,

“ Vivez toujours,”

written

written underneath: I observed that they were admirably done, and looked as if they were half-faded. "So they were," said you, "when St. Clair threw them on the table in the fishing-house."

And did Olivia deign to preserve, by the magic of her pencil, those flowers which the hand of St. Clair culled?

"Love," said you, "has its refinements; why should not friendship?" Was it possible, my charming, my seducing friend, to avoid mentioning my precious rose, consecrated by the tear that fell from the eye of Olivia! I told you, you should see this valued relic, and so you shall; you shall see the identical leaf which your sensibility embalmed! you shall see that happy flower, which once reposed upon your breast, and should never have left mine had its fragility permitted the indulgence!

You must suffer me to see you to-day. It is only at the Abbey I live; every where else I may fairly class with the genus zoophyte. When I see you in the morning, the rest of the day passes cheerily over.

"Felice chi vi mira  
Ma peu felice chi per voi sospira  
Felicissima poi  
Chi sosperando fa sospira voi." GUARINI.

Ah! Olivia, that were felicity indeed!



## LETTER XXXII.

TO OLIVIA.

How often since the commencement of our little epistolary intercourse have I wished for the *herald crow* of King *Mar-rhis* ! how much oftener for the *governor* of *Damietta*'s carrier pigeon\* ! but oh, how much oftener still for the *dove* of *Anacreon*, fittest courier for the sweetest employ I could charge him with ! But when once he had delivered my little billet to thee, my sweet friend, who would ensure me his return ? Oh yes ! you should repay his labour by caresses, and he would return to me for a new task, that he might obtain from thee a new reward.

I have been all this day *reconnoitring* the fickle intentions of Lady L——, to find out if she visits the Abbey (as her carriage has been ordered and countermanded about twenty times since breakfast), in order to enclose you a few chit chat lines in a new publication, which I long to send you ; but despairing of her *rusting* to a *point* until

“ Some consequence still hanging in the stars”

\* Tasso, Canto v.

shall

shall determine her Ladyship's weather-cock mind, I applied to the gardener, who I found was sending you a basket of peaches, and who promised to have my packet sent at the same time. You will find in it a drawing for *Tusculum*, and an imperfect copy of *Sarti's* last song; which I have executed wretchedly. How could *Rousseau* earn a *livelihood* by copying music? There is but one person on earth for whom I would write a single bar. Lord and Lady L—— spend to-morrow with those formal mechanical creatures the F——s, whom I dislike (as theologists say we should love Heaven) “*with all my soul, with all my mind, and with all my strength:*” —will you suffer me to *enjoy* it, not to *spend* it, at the Abbey, where alone I can

“——*Far vita*  
*Conforme a le mie voglie.*  
*Oh! vera vita!*”

How I shall long to hear your decision! Would that I could seat the gardener's boy in *Friar Bacon's* flying chair! and yet if he brings me your “*Veto*,” I shall think he returns too soon. I could not help observing in my walk home yesterday from the Abbey, that though I made a circuit of two unnecessary miles, and went round by the park, though I paused and loitered over every step (busied, pleasingly busied,  
in

in taking down in a kind of mental shorthand all you *said*, and *looked*, and *did*), yet I found myself almost at the Castle before I thought I had got half way; and yet when I was *going to* you in the morning, though I almost flew across the fields, still

“ Every step seem’d lengthen’d as I went;”

and the goal of my impatient wishes to recede, as I approached it!

This almost reconciles me to the *immaterial system* of *Berkley*, that “ *nothing is, but thinking makes it so.*” Astronomers say that the planets recede slowly from the *sun*, but precipitate their motion when returning towards their centre; and I greatly fear, my charming *orb*, that among the many bodies which revolve round *your attractive* influence, there is one whose *centrifugal* force will be very inadequate to retain him in his own *sphere*, or prevent him from being lost in your *vortex*.

I love to speak to you in astronomical allusion; for I find that celestial metaphors best illustrate a subject which is in itself divine!

Does Captain M—— dine with you to-morrow? Do you know I think that man obtains superiority over others merely because he assumes it? Well: “ *on ne vaut*

*dans ce monde que ce que l'on veut valoir\*.*" The indolence of mankind in this respect is astonishing—how many Cæsars and Alexanders has it made! "Assume a virtue, though you have none," says *Hamlet* to his *mother*: which advice I shall profit by this moment, and affect a moderation I do not feel, by terminating this attack upon your patience and your time. Adieu.

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## LETTER XXXIII.

FROM OLIVIA.

No, my good friend; you must not see me to-morrow. We are to have a large party of that description of people whose souls, as the spirited *Cleopatra* of *Corneille* says,

"Le ciel ne forma que du bon."

Such society is not fit for you, and there (as is frequently the case) you would be "*dark from excessive light.*" You must indeed, you must resign the destiny of our *friendship* into my hands; you are too *sanguine*, too imprudent, for the *trust*. You must not come so frequently to the

\* *Bnyere.*

*Abbey.*

*Abbey*. Short absences, in friendship as in love, not only “urge sweet return,” but refine its nature, and extend the possession of life. Montaigne says, with more delicacy than he can generally boast of, that “an unextinguishable desire for personal presence implies weakness, in the fruition of souls.” Oh! let us still converse “in spirit as in truth!”

Your astronomical *hyperbole* made me smile—however, I allow that if (as *philosophers* say) *bodies* attract in proportion to their quantity of matter, my “*attractive influence*” is hourly increasing; for the studious and sedentary habits your conversation and example have seduced me into, make a daily addition to my *specific gravity*; and if *wit* were

“——to be plac’d  
In any set circumference of waist,”

I should be glad to know the just criterion, that I may realize *Swift’s* golden maxim, and “know where to stop.”

I believe Captain M—— does dine here to-day. You are certainly prejudiced against him, although you boast a “*prejudice against prejudices*.”

## LETTER XXXIV.

TO OLIVIA.

So I am not to see you to-day? You say I ought not—and what you say is to me like the laws of the Medes and Persians! You can make me believe what you please, as *Ariosto* says,

“——Far con tue parole  
Ceder che fosse oscure e freddo il sole.”

You have indeed made a considerable progress in the *science* of en-bon-point since I first saw you, and it has not lessened your *attractive* influence in *any sense*; yet still you are a little creature, and I never look at you, that the “*picciotta Isabella*” of *Tasso* does not occur to me!

“Ma pur gran meraviglia  
Fra tante cose picciole si vede  
Che quel che remerando io sento al core  
Non e piccioli ardore.”

“The most obvious point,” says Burke, “that presents itself to us on examining any object, is its extent and quantity; and what degree of extent prevails in bodies that are held beautiful may be gathered  
from

from the usual manner of expression used concerning it." I, however, for the future will render the criterion less indefinite, and make *you* my *standard*. So Captain M—— dines with you to-day? Well, "*this world* was made for Cæsar!"—yet I will venture to assert I shall enjoy more of your society this evening than he will; for

"Have I not seen thee where thou hast not been?"

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## LETTER XXXV.

FROM OLIVIA.

Is it possible, that my not speaking to you at Mrs. F——'s the other evening, when I was surrounded by a crowd, and went away so early, could have caused your absence, and given you such serious uneasiness as your note \* of this morning implies?

"The soul intent on offices of love,  
Will oft neglect or scorn the weaker proof  
Which smiles or words can give."

Apply this sentiment to friendship, and then be sulky if you dare. Ah! my good

\* Which does not appear.

friend, you know little of the heart of a woman, if you suppose the man she appears to notice least is always the most indifferent to her. Taught to conceal our feelings from our cradles, a species of coquetry insinuates itself insensibly into our most moderate sentiments; and, like a wily enemy, we embrace those stratagems we early learn to believe are constantly in agitation against ourselves! I, however, was educated upon no hackneyed principles; and as I am consequently free from the general prejudices of my sex, I am exempt from all those little finesses which are inimical to the candour and dignity of an ingenuous mind: how then ought I to treat the scepticism you have betrayed to the faith of that friendship I have possessed for you?

Apostate that you are! should I grant you a plenary indulgence for all past heresies, will you promise for the future inviolable fidelity? Seriously, however, you are too refined, too fastidious in your notions of attention and neglect. Providence, in endowing you with the most precious gifts, has given an equilibrium to the balance, by giving you immoderate sensibility: it certainly may exalt your joys; but in addition to those ills which "flesh is heir to," it torments you with many self-created evils. I have been paying a bridal  
visit



visit to-day at the town of S——, and spent a wretched hour in the midst of a convention of gossips. The society of these great villages is insufferable; and, generally speaking, a country town is the very emporium of scandal, prejudices, and illiberality. The ideas of the inhabitants, narrowed to the limitation of their sphere of action, and their sentiments of mankind, are gathered from the characteristical traits of the individuals of their own little circle; it is very difficult to converse with these sort of folk with any degree of patience or temper; every thing they do not understand they laugh at or condemn, and that is every thing beyond the literal common-place facts of their own contracted system—or,

“Tous ces riens qui remplissent leurs cœurs.”

There was an old goody in the group this morning, who has taken it into her head that I have run away with Captain M—— from her grand-daughter (for he is silly enough to shew the poetical trifles he writes at the Abbey to the Misses of S——), and who therefore attempted to be very splenetic on the subjects of “reading, music, poetry, and all such stuff.” She was immediately joined by the whole junto, and it was as immediately

F 4

carried,

carried, *nem. con.* that poetry was all romance and folly; that all poets and poetesses were starved to death, and that they should thank Heaven none of their girls were geniuses. There they made a digression, of which you had the honour to be the subject—you were at the assembly last night with Lady L——, and danced with the beautiful Miss A——: Miss A—— has a great fortune, and you were in great spirits—and “thereby hangs a tale.”

So much for the pining solicitude of friendship! Ah, hypocrite! the Misses of S—— think you monstrously interesting; so melancholy, so pensive, they said too: but it is of no consequence what they said. I always return from S—— as peevish as a spoiled child; and yet I am ready to laugh at myself too, for being irritated by the silly prattle of people I despise. The truth is, like yourself, I am miserably fastidious with respect to society. Early initiated into all the pleasures of a refined and elegant intercourse, it taught me to select my friends from the worthy and the intelligent, and to detect the ignorance, vapidty, and self-sufficiency of those mechanical beings who frequently constitute the aggregate of society. This power of discrimination was perhaps a fatal gift; it has worn the attractive gloss off  
the

the surface of what is termed genteel company, and discovered the apparent diamond to be a mere pebble. If you will ramble over to the Abbey this evening, you will meet a few of the few I know you like. Is the Miss A—— so very beautiful? How came you to dance? I never saw you dance; I hate dancing men—so did Michal; for when she saw the victorious monarch leaping and dancing, “she despised him in heart.” I idolize her spirited irony to David!.

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## LETTER XXXVI.

TO OLIVIA..

I WAS indeed weak enough to feel sensibly (too sensibly) your apparent neglect, and yet I am not so refined in these matters as you seem to suppose; but it is certain, that in any sentiment excited by you, I can preserve no moderation. A faithful barometer is not more influenced by the variation of the weather, than I am by the different degrees of heat or cold apparent in your manners. My petulancy, however, on this subject scarcely deserves the name of sensibility, with which you honour it; though, it is true, my immoderate sus-

ceptibility

ceptibility to happiness is more than counterpoised by the opposite extreme of feeling which follows the destruction of my too sanguinely formed hopes. Your friendship is too great, too unmerited a blessing not to be cherished by a thousand lively and tender apprehensions for the stability of its existence; and, to confess the truth, you offer it to me with so playful a negligence, so careless an air, that I fear I shall sometimes have to say with the poet,

“ Le Zephyre fut témoin, l'onde fut attentive,  
 Q\_ and la nymphe jura de ne changer jamais;  
 Mais le Zephyre legere, et l'onde fugitive  
 Ont bien-tot emporté ses serments qu'elle a fait.”

But away with heresy and schism! Henceforth I renounce all apostacy, and shall vie in the steadiness of my faith with the most superstitious devotee that ever assumed the scapulary; but I fear, that, like St. Austin, I shall force myself to believe some things merely because they are impossible: “*Credo quia impossibile est.*” And, my charming friend, I *must* believe that I hold some place in the “*unpolluted temple of thy mind,*” were it only to account for the enviable privileges I enjoy; as we receive the *Copernican* system, if not for its *demonstration*, at least for the various *phenomena* it accounts for. It is certain, that “our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the  
 good

good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt;" yet I fear I have been but too venturous. I never had but one opinion with respect to the society you mention, and you have defined it; but I can scarcely believe it possible, that any thing such people can say, could give you a moment's uneasiness. You must be conscious that merit and superiority such as yours, like the palm-tree, rises in proportion to the efforts that are made to depress it. Captain M——'s attentions at the Abbey are certainly too obvious to escape the prying eye of idle curiosity: he is doubtless a man of some talent, and yet I think rather affects the sentiments of sentiment, than possesses its soul. I have met with many such men; however, he is a favourite of yours, and that circumstance makes his eulogium!

It is true, I was at the assembly of S—— last night, and found it pleasant enough; but it is also true, that though the heart should extend the circle of its pleasures, it may still preserve the central point of supreme happiness undiminished; as the chord of sympathy, which nature twines round the souls of kindred beings, though it may give with elasticity to the pressure of circumstances, will yet seek with added force its native bias.

Miss A—— is very beautiful, and so is

Miss B——, and Miss C——, and so on through the whole alphabet of loveliness ; but, to confess the truth,

“ Their beauty serves but as a note,  
Remembering me, who pass’d that passing fair.”

I shall certainly meet the few of the few this evening ; shall we not have coffee in the little Tusculum—where

“ La liberté convive aimable,  
Mets les deux couds sur la table ?”

VOLTAIRE.

There, and there only, is this charming picture of sociality truly realized.

I cannot tell you why I danced the other night ; I believe I did it, as one does many silly things, for want of something better to do. I once fell in love upon this principle : but I swear to you, never to dance while I live ; though St. Basil of Limoges (the only saint I can find in the calendar, who patronizes dancing) were to return to earth, to enlist me for a cotillion.—Adieu,—till this evening.

## LETTER XXXVII.

TO OLIVIA.

WHENEVER you return me any of my books, I run up to my room, lock myself in, and go over every volume page by page, in the hope of meeting some little pencil stroke, some little marginal observation, which marks the purity of your taste or the strength of your judgment, and renders the book, ever after, invaluable in my eyes. While your packet of this morning was undergoing the usual inquisitorial examination, something fell from beneath the leaves of Zimmerman; it was the little purse of purple and silver I had seen you employed about some time back, with your cipher interwoven in it with your hair. Zimmerman was always my favourite; think you he is less so now? I have thanked him a thousand and a thousand times, and vowed as often never to part with him; yet I cannot thank you, Olivia! but could I offer to you the same vow I have done to him, with the same certainty of its performance—gracious God!

Do you remember, one evening when your necklace gave way, as you were dancing

dancing with so much grace and spirit, your national dance, how busy I was, in gathering your scattered treasures : you never suspected my speculation, and I returned home, rich with the fruit of my dishonesty. From that moment these little beads have been as valuable to me as any thrice-blessed rosary ever was to its catholic possessor. I have consigned these relics to your purse, which is alone worthy of the deposit ; and the heart which now palpitates against them, values these precious gifts, in proportion to the sentiments it treasures for the charming giver.

And now, my sweet friend, you cannot in justice refuse to accept a little *gage d'amitié*, which is, suffer me to say, not unworthy of the object to whom it is offered ; it is a small Florence edition of the “ *Paul et Virginie* ” of Saint Pierre—Saint Pierre, who wrote only to such hearts and such imaginations as Olivia's ; and who can alone be rightly understood by those minds, which, like hers, have with an impulse, an energy almost divine, flung off the shackles with which ignorance, error, and prejudice had loaded them, and flown to seek the source of truth, under the guidance of nature.

When I received your little present this morning, involuntarily exclaimed, “ *L'ambre ne repand pas un parfum aussi doux que les*



*les objets touchés par l'objet que l'on aime."*  
 My heart found expression for its feelings through the medium of my memory; and both stood indebted to a work which at that moment I conceived a worthy offering to Olivia—will she not be propitious? I love these little mutual pledges; they are so many additional fibres to the great bond that unites two minds which nature has organized upon similar principles. Adieu! May "*Paul et Virginie*" sometimes recall to your mind one who will never cease to cherish in his the most profound veneration for your virtues, and the liveliest, the tenderest recollection of the kindness with which you have honoured him!

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## LETTER XXXVIII.

FROM OLIVIA.

You think then, my good friend, that a "*gage d'amitié*" is requisite in such a connexion as ours: *my* heart never felt the necessity; and my memory continually furnishes me with *gages d'amitiés* of those I esteem. I accept, however, your present; it shall be to me all that you wish it; a memento which shall restore to me in idea those hours enriched by your society, and  
 in

in which I felt, in its fullest force, the simple and touching assertion of Ossian,  
*"how pleasant was my friend!"*

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## LETTER XXXIX.

TO OLIVIA.

OLIVIA, my sweet friend, I implore, I supplicate you to assist me against yourself: it is ~~Olivia~~ only that can be opposed to Olivia, and she alone can counteract the evils of which she alone is the cause. Evils did I call them? Alas! are not all pleasures which are transient, though exquisite, evils the most refined and dangerous? their blissful existence scarcely extends beyond the period of their birth. But through how many dull and wretched hours is the heart doomed to beat, that treasures the recollections of the joys it once revelled in, and pines in unceasing sorrow over their premature dissolution! Alas! to such a heart, life is a blank, and the world a desert. "See," said you to me, the other day in the garden, pointing to a withered stem, "that beautiful flower we so much admired, has shed its last leaf; but these thorns survive the fragrant blossom whose fragility they guarded."

ed." I could not help drawing a similitude at the moment—and I fear it was prophetic. Oh! Olivia, the supreme happiness your friendship and society have enriched me with, greatly as I feel, greatly as I estimate them, could not compensate for the horrors of that moment which shall convince me that the ties which cemented our friendship, exist only with me; yet a thousand little inadvertencies on your part, a thousand well-founded anxieties on mine, tell me that moment is not far off, when the cold forms of worldly *etiquette* shall be substituted by indifference for that cordial and delicious intercourse which knew no reserve but what the refinement of sentiment insinuated; no restriction but what timidity on one part, and respect, even to idolatry, on the other, imposed.

Last night!—Olivia! did you know the tender and pleasing emotions that animated me, during my walk to the Abbey, last night! You bid me put Metastasio in my pocket: I had done so, and marked down several passages that we would read and pause over together; (how I love such pauses!) and my heart and imagination revelled in a thousand little anticipated delights, which faded into air as I entered your drawing-room. I found you surrounded by a crowd; delighted and delighting; more beautiful, indeed, than  
I had

I had ever seen you, and more brilliant than I had ever wished to see you.

I had talked for near half an hour to the younger Miss D—— (without, Heaven knows, understanding a word that either of us said) before you seemed to notice me; and then I was only included in the nod and the smile you bestowed on that young Ensign I know you despise: the next moment, however, he was at your side, and you appeared to laugh with all your heart at some ridiculous nonsense he was repeating to you; while I, unnoticed, took refuge in a corner of the room; where, probably, I might have remained for the rest of the evening, had I not been wanted to take a part in that Italian glee which Captain M—— admires so much, and which I think so wretched a composition: this, indeed, procured me some little notice; yet it only rendered me the subject of that playful raillery which you manage with such exquisite skill, and which heals so sweetly the wounds it inflicts. But was it fair, my gay friend, to point out to public observation, a weakness of which you well knew yourself the cause? It was true, indeed, as you remarked, that I was not “most musical,” though “most melancholy;” for I was as little inclined to sing, as to hear Captain M——’s clumsy attempts at sarcasm: that I did  
either

either was owing to you : I could not refuse a request which you condescended to make ; nor could I resent a conduct which you seemed to sanction.

Oh, my dear friend ! let me again implore you to assist me against yourself. Send me no more of these bewitching invitations, or teach me to support the effects they produce. Think me at least, Olivia, worthy of your *pointed* neglect ; whatever sentiment I excite, let it have some *energy*—some character : but the gay indifference with which you treat me, the laughing ease with which you receive and dismiss me, that indiscriminate equality of manner with which you level me to the inconsequent beings of an every day's acquaintance, desolate me ; I cannot support it—I must be the friend of Olivia, or nothing ; her acquaintance I will not be !

Restore to me, then, the Olivia I once knew,

“ My long-sought other self,  
The wish exactly to my heart's desire.”

Restore to me that air of pensive languor ; that touching softness, which breathes the very soul of sentiment, and diffuses a charm around you, not to be conceived, and never to be felt with impunity ; restore to me yourself, or banish me from you for ever !

## LETTER XL.

FROM OLIVIA.

Hence vain deluding joys,  
 The brood of Folly, without father bred,  
 How little you bestead,  
 Or fill the mind with all your toys!  
 But hail! thou goddess sage and holy,  
 Hail, divinest Melancholy!

HAD it not been for your last epistle, “most potent, grave, and reverend Signor,” it is ten to one but I had added to the list of Ravestus Texter, and departed this life in a fit of laughter: not that I was ignorant, that Swift anathematized the faintest indication of a laugh, as a heresy against common sense; and my Lord Chesterfield, as a solecism in the system of *politesse*. Yet I considered these interdictions as only extending to sages and *petits maîtres*, and never once conceived, that the playful spirit of a cheerful woman could militate even against the sentimental dignity of a Laura or an Heloise. But your letter has shewn me the full extent of my error; and I have already abjured

“Nods, and bows, and wreathed smiles,”  
 which

which should alone give play to the risible muscles of “fat, contented Ignorance.” When you again come to the Abbey, then

“With even step, and musing gait,”

you shall find I will meet you,

“Sober, stedfast, and demure.”

My good friend, trust me, there is nothing in this life worth a serious thought; and still more, there are many things in it we cannot think seriously on with impunity; and perhaps the first fruits of my gravity would be to terminate a connexion, which——

St. Clair, you must drop this subject for ever! Friendship has no right to intrude on the jealous delicacies of love.

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## LETTER XLI.

TO OLIVIA.

“I oft had heard, but ne’er believ’d till now,  
There are who can, by potent magic spells,  
Bend to their crooked purpose, nature’s law.”

In short, I must tell you, my dangerous friend, in *plain prose*, that I look upon you to be as complete a witch, as any  
that

that has appeared since Saul's partial extermination of the weird sisterhood; not excepting the witch of Endor, Joan of Arc, or the Dutchess of Beaufort herself\*; for I feel, that, by the influence of your art, you have not only in "sweet madness robbed me of myself," but taught me to cherish the spell which binds me, and to dread the sober certainty of that returning reason your sorcery has put to flight. Every thing I hear, every thing I see, is impregnated with Olivia; and her idea, like the fragrance exhaled from the beard of Aaron, extends to every object within its sphere. "Pray, Sir," said a grave and erudite personage to me, yesterday after dinner, "is Livy a favourite of yours?"

"Gracious Heaven! what a question!" said I, starting from my chair, and colouring to the eyes. The poor man drew back in the utmost consternation, and a general smile circulated round the table. My inquisitor, who had been discussing the merits of the Roman authors of the Augustan day, alluded to Livy the historian; but to me, there was but one Livy in the universe. And the other evening, when a young pedant fresh from the aca-

\* Supposed to have entered into a compact with the devil, to secure the affections of Henry IV.



demic shades, was astonishing the ladies at Mr. T——'s, by displaying his classic treasures, to vindicate the moderation of modern luxury, by opposing to it that of the ancients, and ransacking the Formian, Putcolan, Baian, and Cumæan shores, to strengthen his position; then unfortunately touching on the Ciceronian villas, the word Tusculum caught my ear: it was like a shock of electricity! and, by unfortunately losing the original idea in the association it awakened, I led my learned declaimer a dance, from the Appian Way to your little Tusculum on the shores of the lake of Desmond; where he seemed very glad to slip through my fingers, with the firm belief, I fancy, that he had been wasting a very erudite oration upon as insane an auditor as ever wielded an imaginary sceptre in the dominions of Bedlam. These, however, are only two instances out of a thousand, of the extraordinary effects you have produced in me; and now, as I am certain an influence so unbounded could never have been effected according to the common course of events or fitness of things, I can only attribute it to the power of witchcraft, which the scepticism of modern reason attempts to deny, in despite of sacred authority; but of which, from fatal experience, I no longer entertain a doubt. Having there-  
fore

fore rusted to a point, I have determined on commencing a lively prosecution against you, according to the letter of the law, for “witchcraft, conjuration, enchantment, and sorcery.” I have read, with great care, the learned Howel upon “the Existence of Witches;” thumbed over the Capitularies of Charlemagne, and the Canons of several councils, which have touched on the crime and its punishment; waded through Coke upon Lytleton, Puffendorff, and Bracton, in the hope of new discoveries; and have just set sail for Blackstone’s Commentaries, with an anxiety equally ardent in the same cause.

I find that the Mosaic law commands us “not to suffer a witch to live;” and is so far surpassed by the civil, that, according to statute 33 of Henry VIII. all enchantment is declared to be *felony, without the benefit of clergy*. However, my animosity outsteps not the boundaries of existence; and provided I have the satisfaction to see you punished (for your iniquitous intercourse with supernatural agents to the destruction of your species) in this world, I care not how elevated a seat, or how tunable a harp, you obtain among the choir of “simpering angels” in the next.

However, as you may skreen yourself from my fury, by claiming the right of every

every British subject, of being tried by your *peers* (which I confess are not to be found on earth), I intend to move, that you may be tried according to the old Brehon laws of your country; the simple law of retaliation, an eye for an eye, a heart for a heart: then shall you burn in flames as ardent as those in which you have consumed so many others; every spell by which you have infatuated the senses of mankind shall enthrall your own; and every pang you have excited in the bosoms of your fellow-creatures shall rankle with added poignancy in yours. I have just too discovered, that a statute of James I. is particularly severe on all those who attempt “*to provoke love by sorcery* ;” decreeing imprisonment for the first, and death for the second offence: but, as the number of *your* offences, of this nature, possibly exceed the power of human calculation, you should be tied for life to the unfortunate victim on whom you had executed your “black art” with most success; and, in your turn, feel for him all that you had forced him, and others, to feel for you!

For my own part, I would very willingly myself be this instrument of retribution in the hands of Providence, if, by my heroic and voluntary immolation, I should secure the preservation of the rest

of my species. I believe I should never have been irritated to this refined and uncommon vengeance, had not your witchcraft and malignity appeared more obvious last night than I ever remember them; your air, your manner, your voice, your dress, nay, even your smiles and attitudes, were all equally indicative of one "renowned for magic arts;"

"——Who look'd not like the inhabitant  
Of the earth, and yet was on it."

And, to me at least, you appeared more potent and more dangerous in the midst of your magic circle, than the Canidia of Horace, the Circe of Virgil, the Hecate of Shakespear, or even the Fairy Queen of Spenser. To give you, however, some chance for escaping the punishment which awaits you, I swear to you,

"By Cupid's strongest bow,  
By his best arrow with the golden head,  
By the simplicity of Venus' doves,"

or any more appropriate oath you may please to dictate, that I will withdraw my suit; provided, in this general war which you wage against mankind, you will grant a partial armistice in my favour, and draw up such terms of pacification as I can sign with honour: let a mutual concession seal  
I the

the treaty ; restore me my happy exemption from bliss or from despair, my apathy, my tranquillity, my indifference, and the small, the very small portion of common sense I possessed before

“ You touch’d the freedom of my mind  
With all your charms ;”

and I, in return, will cede—ah ! no ; I have nothing of yours to restore ; no spoil to boast of, but the rich plunder of your justly estimated friendship ! and I would not resign that treasure for the restoration of all you have deprived me of ; nor even for less than what you have not to bestow, and of which a more successful enemy has already possessed himself.

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## LETTER XLII.

FROM OLIVIA.

“ ——— On the corner of the moon  
Hangs a vaporous drop profound ;  
I’ll catch it ere it comes to ground ;  
Which, distill’d by magic slights,  
Shall raise such artificial sprites,”

THAT your host of malicious intentions  
shall retire before my supernatural phalanx :

lanx : in short, your threatened prosecution has roused the energies of my art ; and, while you point against me the whole artillery of the Law and the Gospel, I fulminate against you all those witcheries, under whose faintest exertions you already tremble. You know not how much you stand exposed to my fury ; while I (secured in the gallant clemency of him who protected that enchantment, whose influence he owned in the talismanic eyes of beauty \*) can “ call up spirits from the vasty deep,” to revenge the insult thrown on my power ; not, however, that I should wish to shun legal investigation, since, like ore tried in the crucible, I should only make “ assurance doubly sure,” and force my judges to feel that power they dare to circumscribe, and punish still with all the seducing wiles of my art :

“ Winding me into the easy-hearted men,  
To hug them in my snares.”

So entirely, therefore, do I defy your malignant endeavours, and so utterly do I renounce your offer and your oath, that I even conjure your attendance on my

\* Louis the Fourteenth, who restrained the tribunals of justice from receiving informations of witchcraft.

will to-morrow evening, in the name of all that poetry and music can confer; in the name of Ossian and of Carolan, and by the magic smile of the woman you most love. Then, trembling amidst the mysteries of my orgies, you shall yourself be witness to the solemn incantation which makes that "charm firm and good," that binds you the victim of my art for ever.

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### LETTER XLIII.

TO OLIVIA.

IRRESISTIBLE and omnipotent enchantress, though

"Thou wert girt with  
All the grisly legions that troop  
Under the sooty foot of Acheron;  
Harpies and hydras, or all the monstrous forms  
'Twixt Africa and Ind,"

I'll meet thee in thy cave of mysteries, and at thy feet will vow by all the magic lurking in thine eyes, by all the enchantment breathing in thy voice, by all the spells that wait upon thy smiles, to be the willing victim of thy art for ever and ever! till the delightful bondage incorporates with eternity.

## LETTER XLIV.

WHAT ! you complain of my silence ! My dearest friend, I never loved, never esteemed you 'more than at this moment ; but the fact is, I never entered into a more interesting correspondence—and Olivia's little notes of a dozen lines are more valuable in my eyes than the letters of Pliny or the epistles of Cicero ; but this fascinating correspondence is at an end ; like all my other pleasures, it was lively and transient. Olivia and her grandfather dined here to-day : while I was shewing her a book of botanical drawings, and the rest of the ladies were seated at cards, she took an opportunity to slip a paper into my hand ; I withdrew with as much impatience to peruse it, as if I were a thousand miles distant from her—it ran as follows :

“ I have to chide you, my dear friend :  
 “ I am told that you speak of me every  
 “ where, and to every one, in a manner  
 “ very inconsistent with the moderation  
 “ of friendship. Know me better, and you  
 “ will praise me less, and do not expose  
 “ the character of your taste and judgment,  
 “ where alone they can be questioned with justice. Ah ! St. Clair, do not  
 “ think



“ think I am insensible to the full value  
 “ of your applause : it is from a principle  
 “ of equity, as well as of prudence, that  
 “ I refuse myself a gratification I know  
 “ I do not deserve, and feel it is dangerous  
 “ to encourage. Ill-nature is ever ready  
 “ to lend her voice to the fabrications of  
 “ scandal, and our little correspondence  
 “ has been noticed. I am as much above  
 “ unfounded censure as any one, but I  
 “ cannot conceal that I am hurt and mor-  
 “ tified ; write to me therefore no more,  
 “ my dear friend. If we would live in the  
 “ world, we must in some respect live  
 “ with it. Do not think, however, that  
 “ I mean to relinquish your friendship ; it  
 “ is no longer in my power. Your talents,  
 “ your character, your virtues, the inter-  
 “ esting melancholy of your appearance,  
 “ and the vapid and uncongenial society  
 “ in which destiny had thrown you, from  
 “ the earliest period of our acquaintance  
 “ awakened every secret source of sym-  
 “ thy in my bosom ; and my mind, ever  
 “ on the stretch to seek its kindred asso-  
 “ ciate, glanced eagerly into the perspec-  
 “ tive of that friendship, which, independ-  
 “ ent and disinterested, should have its  
 “ basis in sentiment and esteem, and rear  
 “ its supreme point of elevation under the  
 “ sacred guidance of virtue and honour.  
 “ My father early taught me to cultivate

“ the friendship of men of genius and  
 “ worth, in preference to my own sex.  
 “ Such was the principle upon which I  
 “ sought your friendship. Your diffidence,  
 “ your reserve, and my own timidity, al-  
 “ most stifled our infant connexion in the  
 “ first moments of its existence. But the  
 “ reserve of temperament or habit, when  
 “ opposing, on a first introduction, the  
 “ union of congenial minds, may not  
 “ be unaptly compared to the chill mist  
 “ which obscures the radiance of the  
 “ rising sun : the maturity of day dis-  
 “ pels it, and the orb rises on the eye  
 “ of nature in all its majesty. It is thus  
 “ the soul unfolds its powers, as the mists  
 “ of diffidence and customs evaporate, and  
 “ leave it to the full exertion of its facul-  
 “ ties. It is true, I am the mistress, I  
 “ might almost say, the wife of the first  
 “ elected object of my heart ; but I never  
 “ shall cease to be the unalterable friend  
 “ of St. Clair : and though the wisest of  
 “ philosophers, Confucius, has declared,  
 “ ‘ that we must change often, to be con-  
 “ stant in happiness or wisdom,’ yet I  
 “ hope, from the stability of our con-  
 “ nexion, to make an hourly acquisition  
 “ in both.”

## ANSWER.

“ It is yourself, my inestimable, my  
 “ charming friend, it is yourself, you  
 “ should assimilate to that orb whose attri-  
 “ bute you display in the effects you have  
 “ produced on me. You have warmed  
 “ my feelings into life; you have given  
 “ me a new sense of existence; you have  
 “ nourished those gems which drooped  
 “ for the genial glow that was denied  
 “ them, and have revived those spirits  
 “ which were frozen in the apathy of dis-  
 “ appointment. I will obey you, Olivia,  
 “ for I will be silent. Not to realize the  
 “ dearest wish of my soul, would I sully  
 “ the purity of your name, or profane the  
 “ sanctity of your character: I am artless  
 “ and unsophisticated, unable to conceal  
 “ my feelings, nor hitherto feeling aught  
 “ I should blush to reveal. To reflect on  
 “ your virtues, was the favourite occupa-  
 “ tion of my heart—how natural then,  
 “ that my lips should adopt a similar  
 “ theme! But if it is as criminal to think  
 “ on your perfections, as to expatiate on  
 “ them, I honestly confess to you, my  
 “ crime can only terminate with my ex-  
 “ istence. It is true, Olivia, you are ‘ the  
 “ mistress, the wife of the first elected  
 “ object of your heart:’ that is a circum-  
 “ stance

“ stance you did not wish me to forget,  
 “ nor shall I. I have ever ‘held you as  
 “ a thing enskied ;’ and when you tell St.  
 “ Clair you are his friend, you ennoble him  
 “ in his own opinion beyond all the frivo-  
 “ lous honours rank could confer, or world-  
 “ ly elevation endow him with. If such are  
 “ the emotions your friendship can excite,  
 “ what then must he feel, who possesses  
 “ your love ! Ah, Olivia ! as these are  
 “ the last lines which I shall probably be  
 “ permitted to address to you, I would  
 “ fain prolong the gratification ; but your  
 “ carriage is at the door, and I fear to  
 “ miss the only opportunity that may oc-  
 “ cur, of delivering you those sentiments,  
 “ which I hope will silence your appre-  
 “ hensions, and be the best security for the  
 “ circumspection of my future conduct.”

Such, as well as I can recollect, was  
 the incoherent answer I returned to her  
 letter : hitherto I was a stranger to the  
 feelings of my own heart. My hopes and  
 my wishes were vague, undefinable, and  
 uncertain ; my ideas were lost in confu-  
 sion, and my soul resigned itself involun-  
 tarily to the delightful ruin that over-  
 whelmed it. That Olivia was to be the  
 wife of my relation, I knew—but the na-  
 ture of her attachment to him, I never  
 trusted myself to think on. The delirium,  
 however,

however, is over. Olivia esteems me, and loves another; she has explicitly defined her sentiments; they are those of unalterable friendship! and did I ever dare to hope, to expect more? Oh! my dear friend, the heart is full of involuntary deceptions; it imposes even on itself; and it is less difficult to correct its errors than to discover them; infinitely easier to modify its passions, than to trace them to their secret sources: under a thousand disguises they gather strength and vigour in our bosoms, and we are insensible to their existence, until we have no longer the power, or the wish, to resist the active force of their tyranny. Alas! could I have believed that I should trace the progress of a mere prepossession, from admiration to sympathy, from sympathy to esteem, from esteem to love—fixed, impassioned, unalterable love? My dear friend, beneath these various sentiments, the undermining principle was still the same, yet it did not wholly conceal itself. The moral sense is still alive to every latent evil that would secretly oppose it. The abyss sometimes presented itself to my view, but when I should have fled, I only closed my eyes, and shut out its dangers.

My spirits are low and sunk; I am far from being well; and the unpleasantness of my present situation is not among the

least evils I have to sustain. The delirium to which I have of late resigned myself, blinded me to every impression unconnected with itself. These people are narrow-minded and illiberal; they perceive my attention to their children much slackened; and the means they take to reanimate it are such as must eventually prove abortive. The great stimulus to the exertions of a generous mind is kindness: they might reduce me to slavery, but they animate me to rebellion. I could almost believe, that every suffering sinks before the oppression of a weak, an interested, and unfeeling mind, incapable of decision. Its mode of afflicting the heart of the object of its caprice or aversion, is varying and unceasing; persevering without energy, it wearies the spirits and harasses the feelings; and, in proportion as the mind it persecutes, rises superior to itself, it strains every invention to humble and depress it. A heart, though not innately good, if supported by a strong understanding, may be capable of many virtues; but a heart regulated in its operations by a weak mind and illiberal ideas, is capable of every species of depravity.

When my feelings had encountered any little trial, when the independence of my spirit shrunk beneath the attack of oppression,

pression, and my warm heart chilled to the freezing blast of unkindness or neglect, my harassed thoughts had still one sweet refuge to fly to, and found it in the idea of Olivia. At night, when I sought my comfortless pillow, when memory threw her shadows on my mind, and reflection wearied me by her cogitations, I invoked the spirit of repose, and it descended on my soul in the form of Olivia; and when I awoke with the first beam of the morning, I said, "Perhaps in a few hours I shall see her—I shall hear her." My spirits renovated in the delightful conviction, and my mind was armed against all the contingent evils of the day: but now I must, I ought to learn to forget her.—"Should you ever forget me, St. Clair," said she to me the other day, "it will be a heresy against the omnipotent power of sympathy."

To suppose it possible, Olivia, would be to dissipate the sweetest hope of my life; for the fond recollection of those I loved on earth, is the best blessing I have annexed to the enjoyments of my heavenly Utopia. To forget you in this world is impossible; your idea is become the *intimate* associate of my soul. Death itself cannot dissolve this union!



## LETTER XLV.

My dear friend, this Colonel, this lover, is returned. Shall I confess my weakness to you? I have pleaded indisposition, and have not left my apartment since his arrival. He came yesterday evening a little before dinner. I am a great favourite with the children, and am always the first to hear good news, whether of a party in the summer house, or a cargo of toys from town: they came skipping and jumping into my room almost frantic—"Such news, Mr. St. Clair—you would never guess; who do you think is come?" (I had two of them on my knee in a moment.) "Let me see! perhaps James's poney, from grand-papa's?"—"Oh! a great deal better—brother Frederic, the Colonel;" and away they flew. Imagine my feelings! I had just been arranging Olivia's little notes, with some fragments and poems I had received from her at different times, in a *port feuille*.

This morning he rode over to the Abbey. Gracious God! how I envy him his feelings! Even now, at this moment, a thousand rapturous expectations fluttering at his heart; every pulse throbbing with transport,



transport, and every thought a thought of bliss—he is flying to the arms of Olivia.

What, if she participates in his emotions—if her heart throbs responsively to his, and if all the slumbering sensations of first love awaken with his presence! The thought is madness! Only to think of his arriving yesterday, and not seeing her till this morning! Heavens and earth, were I in his situation!—I should not be surprised to hear he *walked* his horse, and paid a visit *en chemin faisant*. How strongly do little circumstances of this kind mark the character! “Intervals,” says Montaigne, “best discover the man.”

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## LETTER XLVI.

DID I tell you that the Colonel's brother, Major L——, had accompanied him? To-day I was introduced to them both. The former, I thought, received me with the air of a patron, yet with all the suavity of a man of the world; and I might almost say, the cordiality of a relation. I am sorry to tell you, that I can find no fault

fault with him. His person is manly and handsome, though not interesting, and there is that placid expression in his countenance, which speaks the man, equally a stranger to care or disappointment. His manners are pleasing, if not strikingly elegant, and seem perfectly uninfluenced by his feelings: they are invariably the same. He converses well, yet with a precision bordering on study; and his information, which he displays without the least ostentation, is general, though well selected. He has the character of being a very brave officer, and a man of the nicest honour, but not a professed duellist; which is the character his brother is anxious to obtain. He seems penetrating and phlegmatic, with the best understanding, totally devoid of genius; and, by some literary remarks I have heard him make, endowed with more judgment than taste. The Major is some years younger than his brother, and in every respect inferior to him, except in person: he appears shallow, vain, self-sufficient, and overbearing: I do not like him, and our acquaintance will probably rest where it is. The joy which their arrival has spread through the family, recalled to my mind the similar emotions my return would excite in my beloved little family. A natural association of ideas sprung from the

the reflection, and agitated my heart  
and mind with many pleasingly painful  
emotions. \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \*

I had written thus far, when the Colonel's man came with his master's compliments, to request I would ride out with him, if I was not engaged. We had scarcely mounted our horses, when he entered with apparent interest into my future prospects, with the air of one who really wished to serve me; and mentioned that there would be a vacancy in his regiment in a month or two; which I could fill up, till something better occurred. He was yet speaking, when we arrived at the avenue of the Abbey. I involuntarily stopt. My dear friend, I have had the forbearance not to go near the Abbey since the arrival of these two young men; and in the course of eight days I have seen Olivia but once, and that in a crowd of company at the Castle, when she came late, and retired early. The Colonel was delicate enough not to pay her any marked attention; and when he did address her, she betrayed neither the timid emotions of tenderness, nor the mysterious diffidence of love. He however spends the greater part of every day with her, and they ride or drive out constantly together.

The Colonel, observing that I did not  
proceed

proceed with him, said, “ You must accompany me to the Abbey, where I assure you, you are a favourite; you have made yourself two sincere friends, in the Baronet and his grand-daughter; and the former is as fully capacitated to judge of the merits of the heart, as is the latter to appreciate those talents which spring from inherent genius, and are cultivated by a refined education.”

Imagine how I felt while he was speaking: I was weak enough to be so delighted, that there was no possibility of my refusing to accompany him; yet my emotions increased every step we took, and I almost felt relieved, when the servant told us that Olivia had gone out to visit a sick family in the neighbourhood, and had not yet returned. The Colonel left me in the breakfast-room, and went to visit Sir Patrick, who is confined, by a fit of the rheumatism, to his apartment.—This breakfast-room! it was there we always spent the greater part of our mornings—every article of its furniture recalled to my mind some pleasant remembrance, that memory dwelt on with fondness. On a little cedar table that lay in the window, I had a thousand times drawn and written by her side; a music-book of Swiss airs, I had copied for her, lay open on the piano-forte; and many a happy moment

I had

I had passed, leaning over the chair that was placed at the harp. Sweetly did this memento awaken the faded recollection of my past joys; and made me feel that there is “a joy in grief, when peace dwells in the soul of the sad.” Mine was at peace with all the world, at variance only with itself!—I touched, with romantic pleasure, the chords of that instrument I had so often listened to with delight; it returned a melancholy vibration—and at that moment she entered the room. I could not conceal my agitation, nor was she wholly unmoved; her colour changed; and though she gave me her hand with an air at once cordial and graceful, I thought it trembled in mine—but possibly the tremor of my own made me suppose it.

“It is not thus,” said she with an endearing smile, “my truant friend, I should receive you!”

“It is not thus indeed you should receive me; for you render temptation irresistible, and in one moment deprive me of the reward I had earned, by the self-denial of a thousand.”

“But if you retain any ‘faint sketches and shadows of Christianity about you,’ you will recollect the Apostle bids you ‘count it all joy, when you fall into divers temptations,’” said Olivia, with that arch  
air,

air, which always renders her so dangerous and so charming.

“ And Heaven is my witness,” said I, “ that a ‘ joy past joy ’ is that which now overwhelms my senses and my heart; but ah! Olivia, I fear this treacherous joy is like the flower which conceals beneath the freshness of its bloom, and the fragrance of its odour, the most deadly poison.”

She blushed and turned from me, and seating herself at the piano-forte, said, “ It is a long time since I have played for you!”—While she spoke, the Colonel entered: Olivia must have seen him before, by the manner she received him; and when he had answered my inquiries for Sir Patrick, he requested her to play one of the lessons he had brought from England. She complied, and I never heard her play with so much execution, or so little sensibility; the Colonel all the while was beating time with the accuracy of an amateur, and interrupted her frequently in the most exquisite passages to detect a plagiarism. He is certainly not the auditor Olivia takes pleasure in playing to. “ When we go to London,” said he, “ you must have Clementi!”—When *we* go! ah! that *we*! It is certain, that at the instrument he considers her as a mere musician.

musician; while to me she appears like an enchantress, who, by the sorcery of her art, even in the simplest airs can

“ ——— Take the prison'd soul,  
And wrap it in Elysium.”

We took our leave together; and on our way home, the Colonel talked sufficiently of her to convince me that he loves her as well as he can love any human being; and that is about half as well as she deserves to be loved.

As long as I respect the purity of her virtue—as long as I do not offend her ears by an open avowal of the passion which consumes me—as long as I consider her as the wife of another—I cannot see what there is to prevent me loving her. You talk to me of the duties I owe society: what have the secret affections of a solitary heart to do with them? You speak to me of my own peace of mind; but the very agonies of love are to me more delightful than the happiest calm of indifference: and did I cease to love her, I should exclaim, with Petrarch, “ I am free—but I am wretched!” It is probable I shall be an officer in her husband's regiment: this must afford me an opportunity of being near her; and surely my heart is as susceptible of the chastity of sentiment and refinement of passion, as Metastasio cherished



rished for the Countess D'Althem ; Tasso, for Leonora D'Esté ; or Petrarch, for Laura. You would laugh had you beheld with what intense impatience I have lately looked over the works of these enamoured writers ! Henry IV. to sanction his marriage with the Countess de Guiche, quoted twenty examples of monarchs who had married their subjects, and thirty others whose great alliances had rendered them miserable : so true it is, that when the heart adopts an irregular passion, the sophistry of perverted understanding soon furnishes it with reasons for its nourishment.

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## LETTER XLVII.

FROM OLIVIA.

IN the first period of our acquaintance, a little manuscript volume, which I made the repository of those fugitive thoughts, the spontaneous result of adventitious feeling or accidental situation, attracted your notice ; you expressed a wish to have a copy of it, and I promised that you should. The circumstance has probably escaped your memory, but the pride it excited was sufficient to cherish its existence in mine :  
you



you will therefore do me the favour to accept of it, and at once flatter the vanity of an author, and gratify the feelings of a friend. To watch the ideas rising in my mind, and to attempt their realization, had so early methodized into habit, that I can scarcely trace back the moment when I first adopted a pursuit, *redolent* with pleasure, and not wholly destitute of improvement, if to know one's self is the first lesson recommended to the study of human nature. And yet, let me not arrogate a faculty which the most virtuous have not laid claim to—the wisest dare not: I never directed my thoughts into a channel which might eventually lead to self-investigation, and consequently to self-correction; I rather suffered them to direct me, to lead me with a gentle violence I wished, yet could not resist, through the flowery labyrinth of imagination, or the most daring heights of enthusiasm; leaving me visionary where they should have left me prudent; paradoxical, where they should have left me rational; and too frequently realizing the system of Malbranche, that “our ideas are distinct from our understanding.”

## LETTER XLVIII.

TO OLIVIA.

No, Madam; it was not possible I should forget a request prompted by the most ardent wishes; but I scarcely dared to hope that a promise, given with a very careless assent, and to a very inconsequent object, would escape violation. You however have taken the most effectual means to punish me, for supposing you for a moment deficient in the least of those minutæ of excellence, which may be esteemed the minor attributes of virtue.

I received your little volume with the same devout veneration as the most enthusiastic disciple of the sect of Omar would the sacred production of his tutelær angel \*; and the little repository of Olivia's thoughts is to me ten thousand times more estimable in its simple blue cover, than the Codex Argenteus of Upsala, with its violet-coloured leaves and silver characters, ever was to its possessor: it shall be unto me as a talisman to counteract the evils of my fate; for in its pages I shall

\* The Koran, supposed to have been written by the angel Gabriel.

seek for that refinement and elevation of sentiment, which shall enable me to rise superior to the trials of common-place life ; and, still more, when destiny shall have thrown me far, very far from its amiable author ; when time shall have chilled the ardours of youth, and the gloss of its sensations shall be tarnished by the sickly breath of decrepit experience ; then shall this little volume revive the intercourse of soul that once subsisted between Olivia and her friend. Memory, awakening from her slumber, shall give back to the mind the visions of those soothing images it once dwelt on with delight ; the warm spring of imagination shall again flow to the touch of happy recollection ; and the heart and spirits, withered and shrunk in the chilling apathy of sorrow and disappointment, shall expand and dilate in the fond recollection of joys that are no more.

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### LETTER XLIX.

I HAVE received a letter from Olivia ; it was accompanied by a small packet : unluckily the Colonel and Major were in the room when the servant delivered it :

I immediately recognised her hand-writing in the superscription, and the impression of the seal was Olivia's. I hurried out of the room to peruse it; but not, I fear, before the two brothers had observed my agitation; it was almost impossible it could escape them, for surprise and pleasure rendered it excessive: after all, this letter was only to request my acceptance of a little manuscript book of poetical and prosaic fragments she had half promised me some time back. Alas! my dear friend, this little mark of attention, almost unexpected, overthrew all my resolutions (for I had made some, such as you would have approved of); it revived those spirits which gave life and energy to my hopes, and love and happiness triumphed over the ruins of reason and prudence. I am now reinstated in all my precious little immunities at the Abbey; but as I am conscious that I can only hold my inestimable charter by a prudence the most consummate, I behave with a caution so profound, that I could not awaken the suspicions of the Colonel, though he were more jealous than a superannuated Turkish bashaw: in short, I am become a perfect Machiavel in love. I contrive to pay my visits at the Abbey when I know he is elsewhere engaged, and frequently refuse an invitation to dinner, or an evening

party there before him ; yet there is, at times, a cool penetrating glance lurking in the keen eye of this phlegmatic man, that overthrows my best-concerted stratagems, and makes me feel, that, however possible it may be to counterfeit love, it is impossible to conceal it.

This morning I was reading Guarini for Olivia, as she painted by my side : the Colonel entered unexpectedly ; he drew a chair, and sat opposite to us, begging he might not interrupt me ; for he knew enough of the Italian to receive very great pleasure from Guarini, in spite of the contempt the author himself testified for his own productions. I wished to excuse myself, but was obliged to go on. I had just begun the impassioned soliloquy of Amarilla ; and, with an emotion I could not repress, read the following lines :

“ Perche crudo destino  
Ne disunice tu, s'amor ne stringe ?  
E, tu perche ne stringe,  
Si ne parte il destin perfido amor \* ? ”

I involuntarily read the passage twice ; Olivia heaved a sigh, “ rather imagined

\* Why, oh cruel destiny ! hast thou divided us whom love has united ? and thou, oh treacherous love ! why hast thou united those whom destiny has for ever separated ?

than perceived," and the blush that suffused her face, was livelier than the tint of the rose she was copying. With eager delight I gazed upon that blush, flowing from a heart which perhaps at that moment throbbed responsively to mine. A look from the Colonel awakened me from my delirium; his heart-searching glance was alternately directed at us both; yet with a composure, a presence of mind, it is impossible he could assume, he said, "That is indeed a charming idea, and it is with reluctance we pay our tribute of admiration to a man whose life was a flat contradiction to his sentiments. Guarini, the most admired of poets, was the worst of fathers, of friends, and of citizens; and, strange to say, this little work (every line of which breathes passion) has been ranked, by the celebrated *Aubert de Mire*, among the most pious works of the age; conceiving it, from its title, to have been a treatise on the duties of pastors." Is it possible that a man whose heart was agitated by the least pang of jealousy could thus declaim upon the merits of a piece, or the demerits of an author, with the sententious accuracy of a professional critic? No; I cannot think that at that moment he harboured a suspicion! neither can I account for the marked expression

of his penetrating glance; it was perhaps only the phantom of a very sensitive conscience. And how am I to account for *thy* warm blush, and the soft sigh that accompanied it, my charming Olivia!— Ah! I would rather trace them to their final cause, and follow them through all their connexions and effects, than develop the most complicated phenomenon in the physical or moral world, that ever puzzled the brain of profound philosophy. Perhaps, however, it is as well as it is.

“Where ignorance is bliss, ’t is folly to be wise.”

Certainty might destroy a thousand visionary hopes with which I am now feeding my heart; but a little poem which Olivia, who drank tea at the Castle this evening, put into my hand, did not tend to diminish them—you must have it; if you knew the pleasure I take in transcribing her sentiments, you would scarcely thank me on your own account for the trouble.

#### FRAGMENT TO SYMPATHY.

THE eye of sympathy alone can trace  
 The kindred feelings beaming in the face;  
 Whose ever nicely true expression tells  
 The strong emotions which the bosom swells;

That warms the rapid current in the vein,  
 Or chills the sensate heart with mortal pain ;  
 That gives the fluttering pulse its sudden beat,  
 And re-illumes the heart's extinguish'd heat ;  
 Those finer lines that shun the careless eye,  
 Those fleeting tints that scarcely live to die ;  
 Those fragile fibres which connecting find  
 The quick successive shadowy tribes of mind ;  
 The transient blush to rapturous feelings true,  
 The pallid cast of disappointment's hue ;  
 The glance which emanates the anxious mind,  
 In restless search, its kindred self to find ;  
 The flow and ebb of bliss, still sure to roll  
 Its glowing tide, warm from the sensient soul ;  
 The tender glance that melts within the eye,  
 Th' unconscious smile, the scarcely breathed sigh,  
 The silent tear, the thought but half express'd,  
 The sudden heave that lifts the feeling breast ;  
 No look, no word, escapes the anxious eye  
 Of secret, sacred, heaven-born sympathy.

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## LETTER L.

THE Colonel almost lives at the Abbey, and I sometimes accompany him, or I should have no chance of seeing Olivia ; for it is now almost impossible to meet her alone : her manner to me is less playful, less insinuating, but not less cordial ; and by a thousand little endearing efforts she strives to cement a friendship between two men, who, but for her, had probably needed no such effort. I cannot make free



free with the Colonel; I esteem him, but I cannot like him, and yet I am sure he is a worthy man. How often while I look at or listen to him does the *Epigram* of *Martial* to *Sabidis* occur to my mind! and when my reason most applauds him my heart exclaims,

“ Non amo te, nec possum dicere quare;  
Hoc tantum possum dicere, non amo te.”

In our literary or sentimental arguments, though Olivia sometimes coincides with me, she always acknowledges the superiority of his judgment, and submits to his opinion with such unaffected meekness, that in spite of the evident dissimilarity of their minds, almost persuades me she loves him; and yet can a mere general coincidence of opinion, independent of a perfect congeniality of sentiment, be a permanent ground of attachment? it may of friendship, but I doubt whether it can of love.

Bayle, Voltaire, Bolingbroke, and Hume, are always with Colonel L—— the most dangerous of writers, and consequently the worst of citizens. You, who know my opinion of these authors, will easily imagine our arguments run high. Olivia generally preserves an armed neutrality on these occasions; and, when her timidity trembles for the vehe-

mence of my manner, she always terminates our dispute by some little bewitching artifice, some little assertion, in which there is more of heart and feeling, than cool reflection; and delivered with an air and a smile, that make me forget the subject we discussed—every thing but herself. The Colonel listens to her with an attention as cool as if a doctor of the Sorbonne was delivering a Latin thesis; censures or approves with the air of a professional critic, and weighs the justice or detects the fallacy of her position, with the sober seriousness of a judge. My dear friend, this man, with all his profound good sense, has a common mind; and his character may not be inaptly compared to the musical scale of the Chinese; it has neither sharps nor flats: some full and simple sounds may be produced from its vibration; but you would in vain look for those tender half-tones, that divine and delicate harmony, which sooth the senses, and speak to the very soul! or, in the technic phrase of a sister art, he has no pencil touches, it is all broad masses of *light and shade*.

## LETTER LI.

EVERY day discovers the dissimilarity of their minds, and how little they were formed for each other: it is in vain to conceal it from you; I observe it, my dear friend, with malicious satisfaction. Yesterday I rambled over to the Abbey; I had put a volume of the “*Nouvelle Eloise*” in my pocket: this was my excuse; I had promised it to her some time back, and kept it as a *corps du reserve*. I thought the Colonel had gone to the neighbouring town, as he had mentioned such an intention at breakfast; I found him reading to Olivia at her working table; I was confused, and immediately presented her the book, as if to do so had been the sole cause of my visit; the Colonel took the book out of her hand.

“And you are going to peruse *Eloisa*?” said he gravely. “I am going to re-peruse it,” replied Olivia: “it is, I think, one of those books we read with avidity, lay by with regret, and look forward with delightful anticipation to that moment when we shall again read, and again admire.”

“There are errors,” said the Colonel, with increased gravity, “which admit of

no excuse, and should meet with no toleration: To be warned of a danger, and yet to seek it, is among the number: 'the woman who reads this book is lost,' says its author, and yet you find it in the hands of every woman who reads at all."

"Let us consider this assertion," said Olivia, "as among the many paradoxes which clouded the genius of Rousseau; and, I believe, oftener proceeded from nervous irritability, and the pettishness of disappointed expectations, than from intervals of intellectual weakness or mental depravity. For to be conscious of composing a work calculated to destroy the virtue and happiness of one half of the species, and to write it in a style most likely to seduce that half to its perusal, is an act too contradictory to the general tenour of Rousseau's life and sentiments to obtain credence even from the most unthinking mind. For my own part, if I am to judge of the general tendency of a work by the impression it makes on myself, I know of no work that rises higher in the scale of morality than the one in question. It is not by repeating the word *virtue* that Rousseau enforces its sentiments; he steals it into our hearts, and leads us to embrace its principles while we fancy we are only admiring the style in which they are clothed."

"His

“ His style,” said the Colonel, “ is even more dangerous than his principles. it is that which betrays you to embrace opinions whose evil tendency is concealed beneath the graceful drapery of flowery language; and I really believe that more fair unfortunates have been made by his sentimental sorcery, than by the undisguised libertinism of a Sedley or a Wilmot. Where is the woman who would not prefer being the elegant, the impassioned, the highly gifted, but criminal Eloisa, to the formal, uninteresting, but virtuous Clarissa? Vice is never so irresistible in its example, as when wit, talents, and sentiment, lend their charms to its decoration.”

“ Good Heavens!” exclaimed I, “ and can you name vice and Eloisa in a breath?”

“ It is difficult,” said he, “ to define the precise limits of vice and virtue; but Eloisa was certainly guilty in an instance, which, considered relatively with regard to its effects on society, may be termed a crime. If virtue were so arbitrary in its nature as to be estimated only by circumstance and situation, even the most guilty might produce some extenuation of their crime; but the conduct of an individual is to be judged by those laws, which so-

ciety has framed for the preservation of its well-being and general happiness; and according to their fiat, Eloisa was not innocent." Only to listen to this lover, this bridegroom, arguing on the imprudence of an ardent passion, with the cool sagacity of an ancient Bramin, or stoic philosopher! I could not help repeating from Alamanni with a smile, which Olivia silyly returned,

"Chi vuol dar legge a lamorosa node,  
Non sa ben qual sia la sua natura."

"That sentiment, Mr. St. Clair," said the Colonel, coldly, "sounds better in Italian poetry, than in morality."

This man has always plain common sense on his side; he argues, he never feels, and there is sometimes no replying to him. I was silent; but Olivia saw what passed within my mind, and a look from her restored me to myself.

"And yet," said I, "a moral may be drawn, even from the imputed crime of Eloisa; for if the magnanimity, the piety, the more than masculine mind of this superior woman, were not proof against a temptation too heedlessly embraced, and an unwarrantable confidence in her own powers of resistance; does it not to  
weaker

weaker minds \*, and stronger passions, inculcate the necessity of flight from the very first approach of a pleasing error, which may eventually terminate in vice. The first step, however remote from the central point of criminality, though not always decisive, is to be feared; and he who demonstrates that the first deviation from right, in even the worthiest characters, may terminate in consequences fatal to themselves, and injurious to society, does as much service to the cause of morality, as he who draws a faultless standard for the imitation of mankind, and colours the finished picture with lights and tints beyond the most lively glow of human perfection."

Olivia had thrown by her work, and listened to me with the most profound attention; while the Colonel, fixing his keen eye on my face, made me feel that "conscience does make cowards of us all;" for I was glad to digress a little from the subject, and added,

"Much, I believe, of the illiberal criticism which was aimed at Rousseau, was levelled rather at the author than his

\* In St. Clair, as in many other young people in their first involvement in error, the sense of right had survived this adherence to its precepts; and the conduct of the man was an evident contradiction to the theory of the dialectician.

work. He who rises up to demolish confirmed prejudices and undermine received opinions, will excite against him the ignorant and the prejudiced; and that, I believe, constitutes the aggregate of mankind; yet it is certain that when he speaks of virtue, it is with a copiousness, an energy, that can proceed only from the heart. He considers right and wrong, not in their individual effect, but in their abstract and invariable state; and, master of these passions, he traces them through all their modified forms and combinations; but when he speaks of love, it is with a refinement, a sensibility, that marks the interval between the frigid sentiments and common-place attentions of mere gallantry and simple preference, and the sublimity of that ennobling passion, which he, with so much delicacy, yet with so much animation, unfolds. Goethe alone is worthy of rivalling Rousseau on this subject; and I compassionate the man who is not transported with the beauty of their style, when they touch o'er the affections, the passions, the feelings of the human heart."

Olivia had resumed her work, and I observed her colour increase as I spoke; while the Colonel said, "You would have done well to have confined your panegyric to their style; its magic is undeniable; but its influence is transient when  
reason



reason and reflection are suffered to exert their powers: *then* Goethe fails to palliate suicide; and Rousseau to extenuate seduction; *then* Werter appears to us the unhappy victim of ungovernable passions, whose example is the more dangerous from the prepossessing amiability of his character; and St. Preux, as the betrayer of innocence, and the violator of every law of hospitality. For my own part, I will candidly own, if I had a young friend, whose studies I was anxious to direct, the authors in question would be the last I should recommend to her perusal."

"There is certainly a description of mind," said Olivia, with warmth, "which might warrant such a prohibition; a mind whose principles are not fixed, whose character is not formed, and whose passions are ardent and flexible: but if you measure the merit of a work by the effect it may produce on the ignorant, the silly, and the weak, I am afraid there are not many which will escape the fiat of your prohibition; I doubt if even your favourites, Pamela, Clarissa, or Sir Charles Grandison, will be able to secure a saving clause in their favour: for my own part, there are no authors I read with more pleasure than Goethe and Rousseau; they speak to my heart, they enlarge my ideas, they liberalize my mind, and they strengthen

strengthen those bonds of philanthropy which bind me to my fellow-creatures."

"But you are *unique*," said the Colonel, with a smile. I do not think he meant this as a sarcasm: there is an unconscious air of superiority about Olivia, that bids defiance to violation; yet, when a moment after I turned round to take my leave, a tear gleamed in the eye that avoided mine. You cannot conceive my feelings at that moment: the Colonel was deliberately setting his watch by a little French time-piece that hung over the chimney. A pause of a minute ensued; at last Olivia raised her melting eyes to mine, and their glance spoke. Happily the old gentleman entered at that instant, and his cheerful cordiality terminated a silence and a situation equally distressing. He pressed us both to stay dinner; the Colonel pleaded an engagement, and I, who had no such excuse to make, could not resist the entreaties of the Baronet, and the solicitation of my wishes. In the evening, when the Baronet was engaged with the parson at backgammon, and I was leaning over the back of Olivia's chair at the piano-forte, she turned the conversation to that of the morning: "I believe," said she, "I did not take the Colonel's compliment in the sense he meant it."

"If

“ If you took it in an unkind one,” said I, “ I am sure you did not.”

“ And yet,” said she, musing, “ I thought his countenance wore an air of sarcasm : but it must have been mere imagination. He is so worthy a soul, that I believe him incapable of wounding the feelings of any human being ; and so phlegmatic a one, that I do not think it possible to irritate him to a poignant reply ; he may have the wit, but he has not the energy to make one.”

“ A panegyric and a sarcasm in a breath,” said I, smiling.

“ Oh ! I do not mean it as such. I know him to be the best of men ; and it is certain that there was a great deal of truth in what he advanced : for, though I sometimes oppose his opinions as repugnant to my own, yet I look up to them with deference, as proceeding from a good heart and from a sound judgment, totally free from the influence of the passions : but he should have been born a hundred years back—and you, St. Clair, you should have been born a hundred years hence ; then you would be understood, now you are only guessed at. You have got in advance with your species, and your sentiments are not those of the present day, but of times yet to come. There is just this difference between you and Colonel L— :

L——: you feel, he argues; you love to trace an effect to its remotest cause, to seek the source of truth under the most complicated appearances; to read human nature, not through the medium of others, but by the light of your own mind, and to embrace every dereliction from established custom or doting prejudice, which reason points out and virtue sanctions. He loves to support received opinions, which time has sanctioned and experience approved, to inveigh against all innovation, and to conceive the antiquity of a system is the best proof of its infallibility. You, more feelingly alive “to each fine impulse,” have more sensibility, more imagination, and your joys, more exquisite, more poignant, are far beyond even his power of conception. He is, I believe, the wiser man, perhaps the happier, and certainly the most prudent; but I would rather be you.”

Oh, the seduction of this unstudied flattery! Where now was my prudence, my resolution? Olivia read in my countenance all that was passing in my mind; and turning round to the instrument, she played that sweet and melancholy air with which she first charmed my soul, and which she well knows always soothes the perturbation of my mind and spirits. She soon participated in the effects she meant

to produce on me, and, suffering the strain to die away, we both remained silent.—There is a magic in this description of silence it is impossible to define, and I never truly felt its force but in her society.

It has most frequently occurred when we have been listening to a peculiar style of music, conversing on some object that came home to our hearts; or when we have laid down a book in silent delight at some passage it contained. In proportion as the soul is sensibly touched, the mind loses the power to comment, and silence becomes eloquence itself. There is also a certain point of feeling and emotion which even a breath destroys: it is one of those nice and fine movements of the soul which the true Epicurean in sentiment alone knows how to foster and enjoy. The faculty of speech can only follow the heart and imagination to a certain degree; and the feelings, when raised to their *acme* of enthusiasm and power, scorn the aid the proudest eloquence can give as inadequate to their expression. “It is extraordinary,” said Olivia the other day, in answer to some observation I had made, “that many of the sentiments which fall from your lips, seem as if you had stolen them from mine; and I am at a loss to recollect when I made such and such remarks as I hear you accurately repeat; so perfect is the coinci-

coincidence of our reflections, so strong is the sympathy that——” She stopped abruptly, and blushed. With such an opening, common-place gallantry would have been eloquent ; I would not have spoken for the world : we both remained silent. Situated as we are, how dangerous are these silences !

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## LETTER LII.

FROM my first introduction to Major L——, I observed certain inimicalities in our dispositions which bid defiance to an intimate connexion, and therefore I did not seek it, while he evidently avoided it. He even sometimes affects to treat me with pointed acrimony, which I return with interest ; and in general conversation opposes me in every argument with that decided air of conscious infallibility, which is ever the concomitant of ignorance, and consequently with a warmth and vehemence which always gives me advantage. A circumstance has occurred, however, which must render him my enemy, or secure him my friend, according to the influence which virtue holds over his mind, or vice over his passions. By a circum-

circumstance the most accidental, I was the fortunate instrument of rescuing a young female from the life of infamy and misery the Major was preparing for her; and I was equally successful in liberating a young man, who was on the point of being married to her, whom the Major had caused to be fraudulently enlisted, in order to facilitate the attainment of the object of his illicit passion. They were both in the humblest walk of life: the girl is handsome and modest; the lad, honest and industrious; and I had the pleasure of seeing them united yesterday by the rector of the parish. Olivia has taken them under her protection, without knowing more of their story, than that they have been attached for many years, and have supported the most unblemished characters of any young people in the neighbourhood: this she has done on my recommendation. In short, my dear friend, I am convinced that when we enter strenuously, and with all our hearts and souls, into the cause of virtue and justice, however limited our powers or moderate our abilities, we shall scarcely fail of crowning our endeavours with success. My conduct, however, which at first seemed to startle the credibility of the Major, would certainly have been productive of very serious consequences, had not this unprincipled

cipled young man dreaded the affair getting air (as it was attended by some circumstances of the blackest turpitude), and injuring him with his father, with whom he is now using every means to liquidate debts which he has incurred to a very large amount. He accused me with very great vehemence for the part I had taken in a business which did not in the least concern me. I defended myself with the energy of a man who is supported by the consciousness of having acted right ; and after an altercation carried on with great impetuosity on both sides, he parted from me, uttering in a tone of acrimony, " Since you have taken on you the character of a censor, beware of your own conduct, Mr. St. Clair ; you may be fallible in the very point on which you have condemned me." Ah, my dear friend ! that was touching on a chord that vibrated to my very soul ! I am indeed fallible, most fallible ; and were both our conducts analyzed by the microscopic eye of the scrutinous moralist, perhaps my haughty relative would not carry the pre-eminence in vice. The objects of both our passions was the promised bride of another \* ; and if the personal virtue

of

\* " Conscience dictates that we ought not to treat men disrespectfully, that we ought not causelessly to *alienate their affections from others* ; and that in general we



of one would have fallen a sacrifice to illicit passion, what a risk might not the intellectual purity, the mental peace of the other incur ! Happily, both have escaped unsullied ; nor can I accuse myself of having taken any obvious and direct means to secure a return to that passion, which, ardent and all-pervading, is no longer confined to the seat of sensibility, but is mingled with every emotion of my soul, and blended with every atom of my frame. I was in hopes, that when cool reflection succeeded to the first fervour of resentment and disappointment in the breast of the Major, he would see my conduct in its true light ; but I am sorry to tell you, it has produced a very contrary effect from what I either expected or intended. I fear this mistaken young man thinks from me in the fancied inferiority of vice ; but his deviation has bound me to him by the only tie of sympathy that could unite us—mutual frailty !

Gracious Heaven ! is it for man, weak man, trembling in the consciousness of his own imbecility, to bear down upon the tottering steps of his weaker brother ? and should not every generous sluice of pity

we ought to forbear whatever may tend to break their peace of mind, or tend to unqualify them for being good men and good citizens."

HOME's *Sketches of Morality*, vol. ii. page 281.

and

and toleration be opened in his bosom, for the fallibility of that creature whose nature he wears, in whose frailties he participates, and to whose errors he is liable? Atoms that we are in the boundless space of the creation, surrounded by mystery, involved in uncertainty; knowing not from whence we came, or whither we shall go; beings of an instant; with all our powers, all our energies hastening to decay!—is it for us, my dear friend, to assume the right of umpire, and refuse that mercy to each other, which we all look for in common to Him who is himself perfection?

For my own part, in proportion as the weakness of my nature unfolds to the power of temptation, I become slow to condemn the actions of others; and though I lament their effects, I dare not condemn them, while ignorant of the passions which instigated the circumstances which impelled and the opportunity which seduced. It was the opinion of a philosopher, that “he who hates vice hates mankind;” and, indeed, the web of life is such a “mingled yarn of good and ill together,” such a compound of social and dissocial passions, of generosity and selfishness, virtue and vice, that even the best may sometimes stand in need of the toleration of the most indifferent of mankind,

kind, and even the worst may sometimes extort the esteem of the most perfect. I really think the probity of Fabricius, the justice of Aristides, or the patriotism of Regulus, never excited warmer emotions of admiration in my breast, than the liberality, the philanthropy of Atticus, who, unswayed by party, unbiassed by interest, could at the same time honour the opposite virtues and talents of Pompey and Cæsar, Tully and Cato, Augustus and Brutus; honouring their virtues as a philosopher, and feeling for their vices as a man. I can only say in answer to your last letter, that you argue like one

“ Who never felt th’ impatient throbs  
And longings of a heart, that pants  
And reaches after distant good.”

It would now be more dangerous to fly than to remain. Absence is always favourable to true love, and fatal only to those spurious emotions which assume its name. An enforced removal from the object of our passion touches the sentiment with something heavenly, especially in the climacteric of its existence. The presence of her we love, bewitches us with all that can please in woman; but absent from her, her idea raises us to the sensibility of angels. It is Rousseau, I think, who mentions a lover that left his mistress for the  
I purpose

purpose of thinking of her; and Fontaine tells us, who always spoke from a perfect knowledge of the human heart,

“ La defense est une charme on dit qu'elle assais-  
sonne,  
Les plaisirs, et surtout ceux que l'amour nous donne.”

No, my dear friend, I cannot for the present accept your friendly invitation; but I am not the less flattered by the kindness which prompted it.

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### LETTER LIII.

My fate is hastening to a climax. Olivia is to be married in less than three weeks: all this is what I expected, but I expected it as the world does death; I knew it was inevitable, yet lived as if it was never to arrive! You can form no judgment of the misery that preys on me; your equable temperament and phlegmatic mind are exempt from that excess of feeling, which can elevate to the remotest extreme of bliss, or sink to the last abyss of wretchedness. You tell me, that my passion, by its very nature, must be transient, for it is violent and hopeless; but you appreciate it by common maxims, and judge of me  
by

by common men. You talk of love as a youthful appetite, not a serious and overwhelming passion; and you tell me I may nourish the propensity, while I resign the idea of her who inspired it. Oh! you fortunate and susceptible beings! in whose breasts the first emotion of nature is love; who, accustomed to its power, can retain the passion, while you successively change its object; it is, indeed, to you a series of light and pleasing emotions; nor does the apprehension of its future termination embitter the enjoyment of its existing delights: but a heart like mine, destined to love but once, and to concentrate the whole force of its tenderness in the passion with which it throbs, for one only object—it is, indeed, a powerful and overwhelming sentiment, and its misery is derived from its unalterable durability. My dear friend, does not our power to resist a prevailing passion arise from the frequency of its trials, and the experienced effects of its dangerous consequences? but where that passion, which no circumstance has as yet called forth, strengthens in our bosoms, how fiercely does it blaze forth in the moment of its awakened existence!

Robed in the sacred stole of divinity, without power, without temptation, behold the youthful Heliogabalus dispensing the benefits of the deity; he served in the

temple of Emisa, the emanations of divinity beaming in the beauty of his countenance; but removed from the altar to the empire of the world, the slumbering passions wake into life, and prove their wretched victim a monster of folly, cruelty, and sensuality.

You tell me, passion should be combated by passion. Alas! what passion can I oppose to that which consumes me? You answer, Glory. Where is it now to be found? in the page of the Greek or Roman historian, or the chivalric deeds of a *Preux chevalier*? But the truth is, my present views of conquest extend no further than “the rich plunder of a taken heart.” A taken heart! and yet I once thought—but it is over—the shadow of a vapour was not more transient, or more unsubstantial; the sunbeam that precedes the horrors of the storm was not more bright or more delusive. Oh Olivia! Olivia! you have not used me well; you have smiled me into misery, and have presented to my eager lip that cup of seeming bliss, whose poisonous but delicious beverage is at this moment circulating its venom through every artery in my heart.

## LETTER LIV.

I HAVE entirely given over my visits at the Abbey, and had not seen Olivia till to-day, when every person of any distinction in the neighbourhood dined at the Castle. I watched for the Baronet's carriage for an hour before it appeared ; the Colonel, I believe, was similarly occupied ; for he flew to meet it, and almost lifted her out, as if the earth was unworthy of the pressure of her foot. My foolish heart throbbed with such delight when I beheld her, as if I had not seen her for an age ; yet it is not more than a week—and is not that an age in the calendar of love ? She looked up at the window where I was standing, and bowed, while the Colonel was waiting at the carriage-door ; she seemed to forget that he was—and I for a moment forgot him too. When I entered the drawing-room he was seated by her, and she appeared, I thought, engrossed by his attentions, which were more airy, more winning, more fascinating, than I had ever beheld them, and such as no woman could receive with indifference : he indeed seldom condescends to trifle, yet he can do it with spirit, and even



grace; and every woman in the room seemed to be of the same opinion, for every eye was fixed on him. I never saw him look so well; he was dressed in full uniform; his countenance was animated, and health and pleasure glowed on his cheek. I stood at a little distance from them, and a large mirror reflected the whole group. What a contrast did the splendour of his dress, the gaiety of his air, the health and happiness of his appearance, present to the deep mourning of my habiliments, the wan and pallid cast of my complexion, and the gloomy look of hopeless despair that shaded my countenance! Every one was conversing with a friend or an acquaintance—I stood alone! The Colonel was fastening Olivia's bracelet: he took an opportunity, when unobserved, to kiss her hand before he relinquished it. Olivia blushed and smiled, as she used sometimes to smile on me; then her eyes met mine, and I think her colour faded; she observed my wretched appearance, and felt for me. I could support it no longer; my temples throbbed with violence, a dead weight pressed on my heart, and I retired unperceived by any but Olivia: *her* eyes followed me to the door. My absence has not been noticed, for dinner is over, and no inquiries have been made for me. While I am  
 writing



writing to you from the open window of my solitary apartment, the busy hum of pleasure and conviviality faintly reaches my ears from below ; the air that breathes on my face is fragrant and renovating, and the agitation of my spirits subsides to the solemn influence of the hour. It appears to me, that the evenings here, like the parting summers of Auburn, “ their lingering bloom delay ;” the first star that glitters in the west is robbed of its beamy prerogative, and the sun still blushes here, when a little more southward he has resigned his influence to the empire of night. Thus the soft and stilly hour I love so dearly is here protracted ; and while it is astronomically accounted for by the greater obliquity of the sun’s path to the ecliptic, I am willing to believe that *Time*, who is constantly committing some theft on my happiness, suffers a lingering hour to assume that shadowy twilight drapery, which gives an artificial peace to my soul, for the real bliss of which he has deprived it.

To watch the gradationary changes of the seasons, which even a single day presents us with, always sheds a solemn pleasure over my thoughts, purifies and refines them. The shadows of night are gathering in ; I throw down my pen to watch the fading light of the setting sun ; now he sends forth a single beam from

behind a mass of clouds, where, enthroned in darkness, seems to hover the spirit of the storm. The mountains rejoice in the momentary beam, and swell on the sight above the mists that ascend in graceful columns from their rugged sides; bright, yet shadowy, is their appearance, and scarcely can the strained eye define their summit from the orient clouds which float around them. Dear mountains! how often have I watched the rising of the moon which was to have marked your awful height! how often have I seen its mild light sink beneath your shade, and the mists of the morning, rising in light vapours from your summit, shed their dew upon the valley! The sun dissipated those vapours, and his beams exhaled that dew; but many suns have returned and disappeared, yet the cloud still hangs on my soul, and the dew of sorrow still trembles in my eye. These mountains shelter a luxuriant valley, which embosoms the dwelling of Olivia: I can still discern it, though the shadow of the mountains has almost obscured the view; but its fair inhabitant is not there, and am I under the same roof with her, and yet wretched! I once thought that impossible.

Oh, love! if I deplore those mature delights, which I am destined never, never to experience, still more do I regret those refined,

refined, those pure and innocent pleasures, which ushered in your first influence over my heart, when rapture dwelt upon the wing of fancy, and every thought, every glance, every word, added a new and delicious throb to the general sensation of bliss that thrilled through my frame. Meteors of a moment, ye have but made my “darkness visible.”

I have been this hour listening in the corridor to the voice of Olivia; every song was followed by a burst of applause: the silent and rapt emotion with which I listened to her was worth it all.

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## LETTER LV.

I HAD determined not to go near the Abbey, and even refused the Colonel yesterday to ride over there with him. To-day I was wandering about the mountains, and by a sudden break through a coppice that clothed their declivity, found myself in the rich meadows belonging to the Abbey, where a sturdy peasantry were gathering in the harvest, and presented to the eye a scene at once animating and picturesque. I was pleasantly lost in its contemplation, and lolling over a little

wicket that opened to the Abbey grounds, when Olivia, her grandfather, and Colonel L——, advanced from among a group of the reapers to the spot where I stood. I never felt more confused or more agitated. Olivia, I thought, returned my bow with as much coldness as I made it; and the old gentleman, having chid me with his usual cordiality for my long absence, took the Colonel by the arm, and walked to the other end of the meadows to speak to his steward: I was almost on the point of running after them, when the voice of Olivia arrested me.

“ We were not always indebted to *chance* for the pleasure of seeing you,” said she, in a tone I thought reproachful, though kind. “ Nor are you now,” said I; “ I think it was rather instinct that led me to the spot where you were, and which proves, in this respect, as it has fatally done to me in many others, that, with regard to its constant operations, it has too frequently the advantage even over reason itself.”

“ Pope thought so too,” said Olivia, smiling, “ for he tells us,

‘ And reason raise o’er instinct as you can,  
In this ’t is God directs, in that ’t is man.’

But what a dangerous induction might be drawn from this argument! ‘ Follow  
‘ instinct,

‘instinct, it is the law of God; follow  
 ‘reason, it is but that of man’.”—“And  
 why should we not suffer ourselves,” said  
 I, with a warmth I could not suppress, “to  
 be actuated by that principle which the  
 Deity himself has infused into our souls?  
 which irresistibly leads us to the pursuit  
 of what is best adapted to our nature;  
 which secretly influences us to seek what  
 is most congenial to our feelings; which  
 draws the heart to its kindred heart, and  
 forces every sense to acknowledge the  
 supremacy of its power! Naturalists tell  
 us, that the body is only at rest in the  
 place that is fit for it; but the soul in vain  
 seeks to repose in the haven of *its* desires:  
 virtue, which is arbitrary; reason, which  
 is sophistical; and custom, which is  
 dotage, rise up in clamorous opposition  
 to subdue its efforts; and, wearied by con-  
 tinual conflicts, it submits to the over-  
 whelming torrent of narrow prejudices and  
 vulgar errors.”

“It was not thus you used to argue,”  
 said Olivia, looking mildly up in my face,  
 and, I fear, shocked by the vehemence of  
 my manner: “you did not always consi-  
 der man as a being wholly selfish, living  
 solely for his own gratification, and war-  
 ranted by the laws of nature in opposing  
 his own individual enjoyment to the ge-  
 neral happiness of society at large; to the

promotion of which, partial self-denial and reasonable restraint are indispensably necessary : but in this, as in many other respects, you are much changed since I first knew you.”—“ I am, I am indeed much changed, Olivia, since we first knew each other—dreadfully changed.”

“ You disappoint,” continued she, “ your friends by your absence ; you mortify them by your neglect, and you alarm them by your conduct : come, come, my dear friend, your spirits are depressed, you are agitated ; look at this smiling scene ; while the eye contemplates it, can the heart mourn ?”

My spirits were indeed depressed, for with the weakness of a child I wept ; and while the sweet smile of Olivia “ seemed not to know what guests were in her eyes,” she pointed out to me the most beautiful features of a landscape truly animating, and with that witchcraft of manner which she ever exerts over me with such invariable success, drew me from misery, and from myself.

“ This scene,” said I, “ strongly resembles a landscape in La Valais ; such as I last beheld it, when, surrounded by my beloved family, I participated in one of those delicious and simple little festivals, with which we ever ushered in the vintage.” A thousand tender recollections

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throbbed

throbbed at my heart as I spoke, and fancy gave to the memory of past pleasures (ah! guiltless pleasures) a glow which actual fruition scarcely bestowed. I expatiated on those scenes, those regions of mysterious sublimity, “where Nature, with all her grand works about her,” assumes a thousand varying aspects of opposite beauty and effect. Imagination conjured up every scene in fond succession, marked by the artless pleasures of life’s early dawn; and memory dwelt on the soothing vision with the liveliest delight. My charming auditress entered into the full enthusiasm of my feelings, and laying her hand on my arm as it rested on the gate over which we were leaning, she said, “Ah! my dear friend, if the spot on which chance had thrown you in the morning of your life, can excite this affectionate emotion in the bare recapitulation of its scenes, what tender, what lively sentiments must such a heart as yours treasure for those who are the elected objects of its glowing and poignant affections!” Gracious Heaven! what a reflection from her lips! I involuntarily pressed mine to the beloved hand that rested on my arm; my eyes filled with tears; I trembled from extreme agitation; I was silent, but I was understood. At that moment the Colonel and Sir Patrick returned,



turned, and I took my leave. My spirits are now more composed, and I give myself up with a kind of calm and gloomy resignation to the influence of that despair which no hope enlivens, no reason can subdue.

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## LETTER LVI.

You too conspire with the rest to distract me. Gracious Heaven! what a letter was your last! "My dear friend," ah! is it thus you write? "you deceive yourself; your conduct admits of no extenuation; every look, every word, since you have first known this dangerous woman, have been pointed to destroy that peace in her bosom, which was no longer the inmate of your own. The heart which love has truly touched by a thousand secret and imperceptible operations, is ever on the anxious watch to excite a similar sentiment in the heart of the object of its idolatry; and nature and impulse are constantly surmounting those barriers which reason erects between passion and virtue." And again; "This unhappy passion has not only blinded you to your own interest, but obliterated the best impressions that Nature ever marked upon the heart of man.



man. You have broken those endearing ties which once bound you to life ; you have resigned, for the delirium of an immoral sentiment, that soft and equable delight which flows from the natural affections of the heart. I have had a letter from your mother, full of tender anxieties and maternal fears ; you have written but twice to her since your arrival in Ireland ; she fears she no longer has a son ; I fear so too !”

Well, you have shewn me the full extent of my error ; but of what avail is all this recrimination, but to make me feel that the arrow of despair is never so mortal, as when reflection bathes its point in the venom of conscious guilt ; but why, my dear friend, do you add in the next line, “ Even the attainment of all your ardent desires must be the greater cause of all your misery ; you must be conscious that you are beloved, and if your heart is not dead to all remorse, that consciousness must render you wretched.”

Beloved ! by whom ? by Olivia ? Gracious God ! When I read this sentence (which I have done at least a thousand times), all else that you have written vanishes from my mind like the transient gloom of a passing cloud. Yes, you are right ; I am beloved. If to understand the feelings of my soul expressed by some  
tone

tone most fine, most indescribable; if to be tremblingly alive to the same impressions, and influenced by the same emotions, be love, then I am beloved. Oh, Nature! we are thy children, thy artless, thy unsophisticated children; shelter us in thy maternal arms from the fate which awaits us; or if on the world's wide surface thou canst find for either a more adapted companion, whose soul is warmed with stronger sympathy to its kindred soul, whose heart has a single fibre more true to its fellow heart, a pulse more in unison to its ardent palpitation, I bow to the fiat of my destiny, I submit without repining; but I shall submit in the arms of death.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is two days since I began this letter, and the perturbation of my spirits has been such, that I have not been able to sit down for a moment to finish it. I have just received a letter from my mother, full of tender expostulations, but not one reproach. Lydia, too, has written to me that this dear parent is in a very declining state, and has pined in bitter and unceasing anguish since I left her: I have therefore determined to return to them. An obligation to these people *I will not owe*; they seem to look upon me as a maniac, and affect to treat me as a dependant. I have therefore written to my mother

mother to expect me: I have a little scheme in my head, which, if it succeeds, will enable me to add to her income, and to live with her. This is all I can look to on this side of the grave, but beyond it my hopes lighten.

“ O Death ! acceptable is thy sentence to him whose strength fails him ; to him that despaireth and hath lost all patience.” The very name of death now sounds to my ears like that of a friend, and I think I could resign myself to his arms with that sweet and grateful sensation felt by the weary and exhausted traveller, when he sinks in the soft embraces of a tranquil repose. Whether we look upon death with the suspicious eye of scepticism, or the bright and fancy-tinged glance of enthusiastic faith and smiling hope, we must still consider it as a friend, that in all the frailties of earthly enjoyments or earthly sufferings, still hovers near to snatch us to its friendly bosom, when the pressure of life is no longer supportable, and when existence becomes too heavy a burden for the wretch on whom it has been forced.

## LETTER LVII.

ON Thursday next Olivia is to be married, and this is Monday ; the wedding is to be private, yet there is an air of bustling consequence about every one I meet, an importance in every countenance.

This morning at breakfast the Colonel was shewing Lady L—— a set of diamonds he had just got from London. I shall say nothing of my feelings ; but let no man trust merely to the goodness of his heart, who has suffered passion to get the ascendancy in his mind. I would not intentionally destroy the wasp who should sting me, and yet He who opposed the love of virtue in my soul to the strong and impetuous passions of my nature, has viewed in the fatherly omniscience of his care, that in competition with its possession how little I have held the world and all its ostentatious nothings. Yet, my dear friend, there are moments, horrid moments, when acts of villany suggest themselves to my polluted imagination, and to profane every law of virtue, to violate every rite of morality, wants only the power of performance. Exhausted and weary from the violent exertion of passion and despair, I  
awaken

awaken as from a dream that placed me on the brink of some dreadful precipice. I shudder! I prostrate myself before the Divinity I have offended; tears, burning tears, dry on my flushed cheeks, and virtue seizes on my heart. Divine emanation of the Eternal Essence, who breathes life through the universe! I feel thy power; and sweeter are the tears with which thou suffusest the eye, and more soothing are thy expostulations in all their amiable severity, than the delusive smile of Vice, or the seduction of her caresses in all the allurements of their witchcraft. As long, my friend, as long as I have the power of reproaching myself, I shall yet hope I am not dead to virtue; I dread nothing but that deadly slumber of the conscience, when lulled by the soothing song of the syren passions into a fatal security.

An Hour after Midnight.

I threw down my pen to enjoy a solitary ramble in one of the finest nights I ever beheld, and I have returned cheered and refreshed. The solemn stillness of the hour has shed a sweet and soothing melancholy over my heart, and my harassed spirits seemed to repose in the soft sublimity of its influence. I have been gazing upon those celestial phenomena, in the splendour of whose structure the

*acmé* of human grandeur shrinks into annihilation; my thoughts sublimated in their contemplation, and my soul, as if soaring from the narrow boundaries of its mortal coil, and freeing itself from the incumbrance of matter, has ranged through a boundless "wilderness of suns," and in each scarcely perceptible luminary has traced the centre of a magnificent system, irradiating by its beams the retinue of worlds, which, in all the harmony of order, revolve round its attractive influence: then casting my eyes on the vast expanse, I feel my own inconsequence in the creation; I shrink back upon myself; the worm under my feet ceases to be an object of contempt; I dare not deny the affinity of our connexion: like an atom on the face of the earth, my knowledge only extending to an imperfect acquaintance with the spot on which I crawl, my period of existence a moment, my sphere of action a speck, I stand opposed to the Creator of a myriad of universes, my soul is humbled to the dust, and I prostrate myself before that Divinity, against whom, a moment before, I raised my voice in impious complaint, and bade him "shew the heavens more just."

## Six in the Morning.

What a contradictory compound of folly and wisdom, virtue and vice, reason and passion, is the mind of man ! A very few short hours have elapsed, since life, with all its joys and all its sorrows, with every earthly, every selfish sentiment, had receded from my mind, and left my soul free to expand to the bosom of its Creator. But the awful shadows of night have vanished, and with them the sublime effusions they excited. There is a window in the left wing of the Abbey, which, from its aspect, reflects at this season the first sunbeam that gilds the horizon ; it is the window of Olivia's apartment : she mentioned the circumstance to me not long back, and bid me look in that direction when the sun rose ; since that moment it has been my circle of lumination. I have watched the gradual progress of the dawn, and the retiring of the beautiful planet of the morning, with impatience ; and now the window of Olivia's room is reflecting a thousand brilliant rays : it is the Cynosure of love. Worlds, luminary suns, sublime reflections, heavenly resignations, where are you now ? Oh man ! man !

## CONCLUSION.

FROM the time the unfortunate St. Clair had learnt the appointed day of Olivia's marriage he resigned himself wholly to the influence of passion and despair. Still delicate and guarded with respect to her, he was careless of every surmise his own conduct might excite; and believing the object of his affection unknown, he was at no pains to conceal the wildness of its effects: it had, indeed, obtained a mastery over his mind, which he had no longer the power to resist; and while he acknowledged its tyranny, he made no effort, and scarcely felt a wish, towards its suppression. Intoxicated by the exquisite and lively emotions to which his heart had been newly awakened, and which it was eminently formed to feel, he held a fancied existence in the being of another, and by an insensible progression from sentiment to sentiment, he fondly nourished an undermining evil, which, under the guise of admiration for what appeared to him most worthy of being admired, had insinuated itself into his bosom, and destroyed its peace for ever!

He



He was not unconscious of the futility of his wishes; but there was a magic in their delusions which he feared to dispel, and which soothed the passion it increased. He was not insensible to the madness of his hopes; but it was the insanity of love, and to his glowing and susceptible heart more grateful than all the sober sense of reason and prudence. His fine understanding could easily have rectified the errors of his passions; but he had perverted its use, and its sophistry only served to sanction those evils its native strength was adequate to destroy.

A few days previous to the marriage of Olivia, he was met wandering about the grounds of Desmond, by its worthy and unsuspecting master. By an unaffected coincidence with his most favourite pursuits, by his prepossessing manners, his talents, and being the son of an old friend, St. Clair had won on his affections, and excited a lively interest in his bosom; he had remarked his unusual absence, and he now chid him for it with a cordial severity, and insisted on taking him home to dinner. The imprudent and unfortunate St. Clair had not the self-denial to resist the invitation, and accompanied him to the Abbey. He found, or fancied he found, Olivia much changed in her manner to him: this threw him off his guard; and

when in the evening the old gentleman was called away on some magisterial business, and they were left alone, his powerful emotions bid defiance to concealment; and Olivia, scarcely less confused, less agitated, attempted to terminate a silence and a situation distressing beyond longer endurance, by saying, with a smile, “that it was a long time since he had read to her,” and offered him a book that lay by her on the table; St. Clair took it in silence, it was the *Life of Petrarch*; and from the first page he opened, he read, in a voice scarcely articulate, the following passage:

“Till this moment I was a stranger to love, but its brightest flame was now lighted up in my soul; honour, virtue, and the graces, a thousand attractions, a thousand amiable conversations, these, oh love! were thy tender ties, these are the nets in which thou hast caught me. How was it possible for me to avoid the labyrinth, a labyrinth from which I shall never escape! Hitherto I feared not love; my affections, cold as ice, formed around my heart a crystal rampart; tears were strangers to my eyes, my sleep was undisturbed, and I saw with astonishment in others, what I had never experienced in myself. Such have I been; alas! what am I now?” St. Clair flung the book from him,

him; he fell at the feet of Olivia; he caught her hands, and pressed them to his heart and to his lips, exclaiming, with impassioned wildness, "What am I now, indeed?"

"St. Clair, my dearest friend," sighed the trembling and agitated Olivia, "recollect yourself; 'tis Olivia, 'tis your Olivia who entreats you, supplicates you." The plaintive sound of her voice, the tender melancholy of her looks, melted him. "My Olivia!" he faintly repeated, "gracious Heaven! my Olivia!" His tears fell upon the hand she no longer struggled to withdraw; nor did he weep alone: the bosom of Olivia throbbed high, every pulse fluttered with exquisite emotion, and the kindred drops that swelled in her eyes, confirmed all those eyes had been but too faithful in expressing. St. Clair was beloved, and the sorrows of his life were all repaid, all forgotten in the ecstasy of a moment. "It is enough! it is enough!" he falteringly exclaimed; "now can I die the death of the blessed." At that moment a footstep approached the door; he arose in extreme perturbation, and rushed out of the room to conceal that emotion he could not suppress; happily it was only a servant; and before the return of her grandfather, the agitated Olivia had leisure to recover some degree of composure.

sure. Sir Patrick immediately inquired into the sudden disappearance of St. Clair. Love taught Olivia the first lesson of dissimulation ; her excuse was delivered in a voice of hesitation, and uttered with a blush of virtue's first deviation : indisposition, she said, had carried him home. " He is indeed, I think, changed in his appearance," said the Baronet : " I fear he inherits the irritable constitution of his father. Lord L—— is not using him well ; his talents are serviceable to his children, and he would continue him so, by keeping him in a state of dependance ; you should use your influence with the Colonel for him, Olivia." She felt for the first time the pang of dissimulation ; and while she derived her security from the unsuspecting simplicity of her grandfather's heart, the consciousness of imposing on it, agonized every virtuous feeling of her own. St. Clair did not return to the Castle till early the next morning ; he had watched from an eminence the light that, till a late hour, appeared in the windows of Olivia's apartment ; when it was extinguished, he ventured to approach near the house, deriving a romantic satisfaction from this approximation to the treasure of his heart, as the soul is fancifully supposed to hover near the receptacle of the body it once animated. As he advanced,  
 he

he heard the sash of the window drawn up, and the next moment the sound of her harp struck on his ear; she played an old plaintive air, and gave it all the tender expression of which it was susceptible.

The most melancholy emotions, mingled with a thrill of rapturous enthusiasm, seized on the heart of St. Clair; and the soft sighs that stole from the lips of Olivia, and mingled with the sorcery of her music, threw him from every restraint of caution and prudence: he pronounced her name in a tone of delirium and passion; the sound of his voice penetrated to the heart of Olivia: amazement and apprehension hurried her from the window; love insensibly drew her back to it, in the voice of St. Clair.

“Imprudent man!” she cried, “leave this spot; would you destroy me?”

“Not for a thousand worlds, Olivia.”

“Then fly, for Heaven’s sake, leave me for ever!”

“One day more, and I shall indeed leave you for ever, Olivia. I return immediately to Switzerland, never to behold you or Ireland again; let me then see you for five minutes to-morrow evening in the fishing-house: it is my last request.”

“Impossible!” interrupted Olivia, with increased agitation: “I cannot—I must not consent.”

“ You must, you will consent,” said St. Clair, wildly : “ you have robbed me of my peace for ever ; you dare not refuse me this last, this small request. Oh Olivia, in mercy——”

“ Cruel, cruel !” cried the terrified Olivia, weeping with bitterness, “ you are urging me on to my destruction. At the fishing-house to-morrow evening—be it so then.”

She hastily closed the window, and St. Clair still remained under it overwhelmed by the most tumultuous emotions, when the sound of horses’ feet caught his ear, and he observed the heads of two men over the quickset hedge which ran on one side of the lawn, and divided it from a path in the demesne to the next market-town. The horsemen galloped away, and he followed them for some paces, but the darkness of the night soon concealed them from his view.

This circumstance at first excited some uneasy apprehensions ; but they were soon drowned in the more poignant emotions that overwhelmed him. The next morning his appearance at the breakfast-table of Lady L—— was hagard and wild ; but scarcely excited notice, and elicited no kind of attention.

Rich in every endowment which conciliates affection, attracts admiration, and  
secures

secures esteem, St. Clair had made himself some enemies, and no friends, even in the very bosom of a family who were his nearest relatives. The family of L—— grounded its opinions of human nature on the ordinary characters of the world, and derived their sentiments from the trite maxims of common-place prejudice. In their eyes, situation gave dignity to the man, not the man to the situation; and they were astonished to find, in one who had been thrown on their bounty for future support, and from whom they had looked for implicit and humble acquiescence, the unshaken stability of a proud and noble mind, tempered only by that meekness which is the corrective of self-love, not its debasement. His talents gave him a decided superiority, and the inflexibility of his principles did not suffer him to lessen their influence by a sycophantic accedence to an inferiority he did not feel and could not assume; the independence of his spirit was looked on as arrogance, and the disinterested tenour of his sentiments was scoffed at as romance. This striking contrast of character and opinion bid defiance to the intimacy of friendship. It has been observed, that “many enemies is no less a proof of merit than many friends,” and St. Clair evinced the truth of this assertion; his superior merit had



raised him one inveterate enemy in Major L——, who, arrogant and overbearing, impatient of rivalry even in those respects in which he had the least claim to perfection, and no wish to excel, envied his cousin for that superiority he could not but feel, and hated him he envied. Their arguments were frequent, their opinions always opposite; and while St. Clair treated his arrogance as the folly of a boy, he opposed his sentiments as the errors of a man. These germs of antipathy were soon ripened to maturity in the bosom of the Major, by the discovery made by St. Clair of his dishonourable conduct with respect to the young peasant and his bride, and the restraint which that discovery laid him under. From the moment that fear mingled with dislike he marked out its object as the victim of his malice and resentment; and the unfortunately placed passion and unguarded conduct of St. Clair but too soon furnished him with means of realizing his wishes. The frequent visits of St. Clair to Desmond Abbey, the evident pleasure with which those visits were received by Olivia, and his emotions when her name was mentioned, convinced him not only that St. Clair was attached to the betrothed wife of his brother, but that he must have received encouragement sufficient to sanction



tion the presumption of such an attachment. One passion increased and strengthened another; and an opinion, which was at first embraced at the instigation of revenge, seeking for an instrument by which to exercise its evil intentions, was soon confirmed by a mistaken sense of honour; and as he considered St. Clair as injuring that of his family in the nicest point, he only waited for confirmation of his suspicions sufficiently strong to authorize him in the conduct he meant to pursue: in the mean time, with an artifice seemingly inimical to the impetuosity of his character, he insensibly insinuated suspicion and distrust into the bosom of his brother.

The air of abstraction which involved the manners and conduct of St. Clair; his frequent visits at the Abbey, the strong similarity of his character with that of Olivia, and their mutually favourite pursuits, were all artfully commented on with plausible exaggeration, and gradually ripened some infant surmises in the bosom of the Colonel, which his penetration had awakened, but which his unbounded confidence in the affections of Olivia, and his faith in the purity of her principles, had nearly stifled in the first moment of their existence. The character of Colonel L—— was cool, deliberative, and penetrating; cautious of admitting suspicion,

he was still more cautious of dismissing it when once received; capable of the deepest dissimulation when warranted by circumstances, and never offering nor ever forgiving any intended insult or premeditated injury. He admired the talents of St. Clair; and though the only one of his family capable of appreciating his worth, he would not trust himself with forming a judgment of his character from the favourable prepossession of external graces and shining abilities. With whatever success therefore the Major had attempted to awaken the jealousy of his brother, a circumstance occurred, almost on the eve of his marriage, sufficient to excite suspicion had it not existed, and to have confirmed it if it had. The two brothers had gone on a shooting party, at no great distance from the Castle, and having been induced to join a few convivial friends at the house of an intimate acquaintance, they sent home their servants; and returning themselves at a late hour, as the shortest way, took a bye-path through the Abbey demesne. The night was calm and serene, and a strain of distant music stole sweetly on the stillness of the air; they paused, listened with attention, and on a nearer approach to the house, the Colonel recognised the tones of Olivia's harp. They walked their horses softly over the turf  
till

till they came nearly opposite her window. What was the exultation of the Major, the amazement, the consternation of his brother, when he heard the dialogue that passed between Olivia and St. Clair! The Colonel was still himself, and they both rode off without being observed by Olivia, or recognised by St. Clair.

The next evening, almost an hour before the appointed time, the unhappy St. Clair arrived at the fishing-house. The night was cold and gloomy, and a chill blast crept in mournful murmurs among the trees of the extensive wood whose foliage strewed the earth, and was carried by the wind in rustling eddies to the edge of the lake. The mind of St. Clair, whose tone was well adapted to the gloom of the surrounding scenery, was agonized by impatience for the arrival of Olivia; and, tortured with apprehensions for her safety, he almost repented the promise he had extorted, yet almost feared the failure of its accomplishment. At last the Abbey bell struck seven; a moon-beam that shone dimly through a mass of clouds fell on some object moving at a distance.—It was Olivia! He would have flown to meet her, but a chillness seized his heart, his limbs trembled, and he had not the power to move. Olivia observed him, and suddenly stopped. “ Olivia!” he exclaimed. His

voice reassured her; she advanced, and he with difficulty supported her to the fishing-house: her whole frame trembled with excessive emotion; her hand was colder than that of death, her voice was broken and inarticulate, she breathed with difficulty; the moonlight that fell on her face, added to its ashy paleness, and her tottering limbs could no longer afford her support. St. Clair in an agony of despair pressed her almost lifeless form to his bosom, and bending one knee to the earth received the precious burden on the other. The head of Olivia rested on his shoulder; the tender sigh that stole from her lip, breathed on his; and their tears mingling as they flowed, relieved the oppression of their hearts; those hearts whose rapid palpitation diffused a glow through their frames; those hearts which for the first time throbbed responsively against each other, and felt the full power of their exquisite feelings warmed into life. Their emotions were powerful and dangerous; but scarcely a moment was allotted to their indulgence. The door of the fishing-house suddenly burst open, and two men rushed in. Olivia uttered a faint scream, and clung with horror to that bosom on which a moment before she had reposed in all the debility of weakness, in all the tenderness of passion.

“ Turn,

“Turn, villain!” said a loud and angry voice, “turn and defend yourself, if your cowardice is not equal to your villany.” —“Suffer me to be the champion of my own honour, Major L——!” exclaimed his brother, in a firm and unimpassioned tone; and gently disengaging the arms of Olivia from St. Clair (who, almost wild with rage, had vainly striven to do so), he added, “but I entreat you will take care of this unfortunate.” —“Colonel L——!” faintly exclaimed Olivia, and fainted in the arms of the Major. St. Clair followed the Colonel to a small opening near the fishing-house, who, turning round, said in a collected manner, “Mr. St. Clair, give me your attention for a few minutes.” The tranquillity of the Colonel’s air calmed the perturbation of St. Clair’s spirits; he bowed slightly. “All recrimination,” said the Colonel, in a firm and decided tone, “would now be idle and vain; nor shall I expatiate upon a mode of conduct the turpitude of which you cannot defend, and which it must be painful to me to dwell on! In brief, then, you have injured me, Mr. St. Clair, in the nicest point that one man can injure another; you have disregarded the ties of affinity, you have violated the rites of hospitality, you have tainted the principles and murdered the peace of an amiable woman, you have frustrated the

hopes and destroyed the almost realized expectations of two noble families; you have added the deepest dissimulation to the deepest criminality; under the character of a man of sentiment you have acted the part of a libertine; and while the terms, virtue, honour, and independence, animated your conversation, deception, artifice, and villany, influenced your conduct: nay, Sir, hear me out; I come not here as an assassin, but as a man injured beyond all reparation, to oppose my life to yours; you see I am come prepared too." He presented a pistol and charge to St. Clair, who took it with an air of the wildest insanity, and, in a tone of frenzy, he exclaimed, "Colonel L——, I will not fight you!"

"Not fight me!" reiterated the Colonel: "if you wish to give the affair publicity, I will meet you, when and where you please; but if you mean to add cowardice to villany, go, I give you your life! retire with it to some obscure corner of the earth, where its baleful example may not infect the species, and——"

Wild, even to madness, St. Clair retreated a few paces, and, frantically charging the instrument of death, he exclaimed, "Now, Sir, our injuries are mutual!" They exchanged shots; St. Clair's passed over the Colonel's shoulder, and slightly grazed

grazed his arm ; that of the Colonel was lodged in the breast of St. Clair. At that moment Olivia recovered from her insensibility, and breaking from the arms of the Major, she rushed to the spot. The report of the pistols had brought some peasants, who were walking near it, there also, some of whom alarmed the servants of the Abbey ; and the circumstance reaching the ears of Sir Patrick Desmond, accompanied by a large party of gentlemen, who had dined with him, he hurried to the place. What a scene presented itself ! Weltering in his blood, and supported in the arms of a servant, lay the unfortunate St. Clair ; over him in speechless agony, hung Olivia, while the Major vainly endeavoured to draw her from the melancholy object : at a little distance, a servant was tying up the bleeding arm of the Colonel, who leaned for support against the trunk of a tree, his eyes fixed on Olivia and St. Clair. The flambeaux which the servants had brought out cast a lurid glare on the scene, and all was silent horror and consternation. With an effort of strength, which frequently precedes dissolution, the dying St. Clair raised himself in the arms of the man who supported him, and catching the hands of Olivia with the firm grasp of death, and fixing his glazed eyes on her face, expired



pired without a groan. The body of the unfortunate St. Clair was carried to the fishing-house; Olivia in a state of insensibility was conveyed in her grandfather's arms to the Abbey, and followed thither by the Colonel and Major L——, with the rest of the gentlemen. When Olivia was consigned to the care of her female attendants, the Colonel retired with Sir Patrick and two mutual friends. After a conference of near an hour, he mounted a horse that was in waiting for him, and returned to the Castle. Two days after he set off for England; and though the reports which the whole affair occasioned were various, idle, and improbable, it was generally believed that the marriage was entirely broken off, that Olivia and St. Clair had carried on for some time a criminal intercourse, and that a duel had taken place in consequence of the Colonel having detected them together a day or two previous to his nuptials.

The body of St. Clair was consigned to the earth the day after his dissolution; and the unfortunate Olivia soon lost a sense of her misery in the delirium of a raging fever. In the ravings of her insanity, though she frequently dwelt on the cause of her recent sorrows, the name of her father more frequently hovered on her lips, than that of her lover: that unhappy



happy father but too soon learnt the extent of his child's wretchedness, and the cruel exaggeration of malicious report blasted her ruined fame in his ears, yet he believed her innocent, for he had reared her virtuous. He arrived at the Abbey in all the agony of parental affliction, invulnerable to every emotion less poignant than that which his child excited, and careless of the reception he should meet with from its owner. Sir Patrick Desmond met the husband of one Olivia, and the father of another, with a violent burst of sorrow; the energies of his mind were blunted by age, by sickness, and disappointment; and the common misery of the two unhappy parents dissolved their mutual animosity, and united them in all the sympathy of affliction. The restoration of Olivia's senses was slow, her recovery still slower, and in its progress evinced that the foundation of her constitution was destroyed for ever. Her first interview with her father had nearly occasioned a dangerous relapse; yet her sanguine parents looked forward with anxious hope to her recovery, from the moment she was able to leave her bed.— Olivia alone knew the certainty of her approaching dissolution; "It is in vain," said she with firmness to the physician who attended her, "that your humanity

would

would feed me with delusive hopes. I feel within myself those lurking principles of decay which tell me I cannot long survive the destruction of my peace, my reputation, and my happiness; and I hope I have still sufficient virtue left not to wish it: it would, however, be useless cruelty to my beloved parents to anticipate their misery. Let my death come when it will. it will fall heavy on them; and to awaken them to a sense of the destined period of my existence would be only to add the agony of miserable expectation to the settled sorrow of despair."

The physician, who did not think her danger so imminent as she herself seemed to suppose, good-naturedly replied, that her spirits were more affected than her constitution, and that if they once got her through the winter months—— She interrupted him with a melancholy smile, exclaiming from Ossian, "The spring shall return with its showers, but no leaf of mine shall arise." She continued to linger in a gentle and almost imperceptible decay; a placid resignation had taken possession of her mind, and shed its touching expression over her countenance. Her conversation was calculated to cheer and amuse her parents, as well as to strengthen and prepare their minds for the heavy calamity which she believed was at no great

distance ; but she never once made the late unhappy events of her life the subject of her conversation. She induced her grandfather to settle half the income he had allowed her on her father, and seemed to derive peculiar satisfaction from the circumstance. She sketched out the plan of a school for orphan children, which Sir Patrick Desmond had promised to endow ; and she seemed wholly intent on works of benevolence and utility.

Being told one morning that the tenantry were celebrating, as usual, her grandfather's birthday on the lawn, she had herself carried to the balcony, and received their congratulations with seeming pleasure, but with evident emotion. Observing six old pensioners among the crowd, who had been for some time supported by her bounty, she sent them their half-year's allowance in advance. In the evening she called for her harp, which she had not touched since the fatal night when St. Clair last heard it ; she struck with a feeble hand a few mournful chords ; and by a melancholy association of ideas she attempted to play "*Sear fuint na Companach,*" or, The Parting of Friends. It was the favourite of her grandfather ; it had been taught her by her mother. Her fingers trembled on the strings ; her voice died away, and her eyes swam in tears—  
her

her emotions were infectious ; her grandfather and father were equally alive to the cause—they both wept bitterly. Olivia threw herself into the arms of one parent from those of another. She was the first to recover composure. She affected to treat her feelings as weak and childish, and had her harp sent to her own room, determined, she said, to conquer her weakness, and amuse herself in future by playing on it. Her emotions, however, had been too powerful for her frame ; she fainted in the arms of her father, while, with a smile of self accusation, she was deploring that sensibility whose powers she could not resist. The next day she seemed visibly altered ; a hectic flush glowed on her cheek, and lit up her countenance with its wonted animation ; and she seemed much interested in something she was writing. At a late hour the female attendant who slept in a closet within her room, heard her accompanying her harp with her voice. The next morning she was found still seated at it : she was leaning back in her chair ; her elbow rested on a written paper that lay on the table by her side : one arm supported her head, the other hung by her side—she was dead. On the desk before her rested a book, in which were transcribed the following words from Ossian, set to music by herself :

self: " My sighs arise with the beam of the east, my tears descend with the drops of the night. I was a lovely tree in thy presence, Oscar, with all my branches round me ; but thy death came like a blast of the desert, and laid my green head low. The spring returned with its showers, but of me not a leaf sprung \*."

The written paper alluded to ran as follows :

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#### OLIVIA TO HER FATHER.

A SHORT time shall elapse, and the late melancholy circumstances of my life, that now interest and engage the little circle in which I move, shall be given to oblivion. The various and exaggerated reports of the common-place detailer shall expire in their own insignificance ; the invidious observations of idle malice shall lose their venom in the frequency of reiteration ; and the hand of contemptuous scorn shall drop that finger it can no longer point at an object, who will have expiated by a premature death the errors of a transient life, and sought for that refuge in the grave the world could not afford her.

But there is yet a record from which time will not efface the misfortunes of the child ! It is the heart of the father drooping over the disappointment of its cherished hopes ; it will feed and nourish, while it bitterly deplores, the source of its misery. Unable to separate the crime from the criminal, the fatal connexion will awaken the most agonizing emotions ; it will dwell with melancholy delight on the memory of a beloved object ; it will bleed in parental anguish over her errors and her misfortunes. It is to you then, my father, that I address myself ; to you who were to me the mortal representative of the Deity on earth, whose least gift was existence, whose cares were coeval with my life, and whose tenderness shall survive its early extinction ; who often stood between me and error when caution and prudence had withdrawn their barrier, and to whose heart I would not have given a premeditated pang for the best joy of the most blissful hour of my existence. It is to you then I would offer some extenuation of a conduct which cannot be justified, but may admit of a palliation. I would soften the asperity of your regret, by convincing you that my love for virtue survived my adherence to her principles ; that when I embraced an ill-fated passion I shrouded its deformity in the delusive veil

veil of sentiment ; and that hovering even on the very brink of destruction, I still clung to the bosom of imaginary perfection.

The child of love and of misfortune, my character received its most prominent features from the peculiar circumstances of my birth. Reared in solitude and fostered in the arms of fond indulgence, my affections were limited, but increased by that limitation. As the light strengthens in refulgence from the contraction of its beams, my soul, alive to every species of tender or animated emotion, was impracticable to the frigid sentiments of tranquil affection. With all the sensibility which is the general characteristic of my sex, and which individually was supremely mine ; with an imagination to magnify, and a fancy to colour those outlines but faintly sketched by the finger of reality, I looked on the world rather as I wished it than as it was ; and my ideas, like my sorrows and my joys, rose beyond the scale of moderate feeling and moderate conception. The most rapturous, the most irreclaimable of enthusiasts, I was doomed to experience the opposite extremes of bliss or misery in all their excesses of poignancy ; and warmly participating in every species of human happiness or human affliction, I was equally alive to the thrill of pleasure  
or



or the pang of woe. Such was the native tone of my character ; it was modulated, not changed, by education. You early dropped the seeds of taste and refinement into my mind, nor found the soil unpropitious to their vegetation. Refined sensations, elegant desires, acute perceptions, sprung from their cultivation ; and like a delicate exotic in a foreign clime, whose bloom is tarnished by every beam too ardent, by every gale too chill, I timidly struck back upon myself from the freezing blight of unmerited neglect, from the sarcastic notice of ignorance and envy. You sought to render me perfect in a sense in which perfection was misfortune ; and those talents and that information which rendered me the idol of my own partial family, left me beyond its endearing circle an object of curiosity rather than affection ; and like a being of another sphere new lighted on a distant orb, I understood not the world, nor the world me. Early misfortune marked the progress of my growing years ; and when the death of my mother and my sequestration from my home threw me a youthful actor on the scene of life, desolate and unconnected, I felt myself alone in the universe. Then, too, I felt the misery of possessing feelings so delicately susceptible of every slight, and of a mind whose sensibilities had been  
but



but too carefully nurtured into maturity, which sensitively shrunk back from the rude intercourse of common-place life, and felt to the very quick the sharp reprehension of insolent rank, the rough reproof of vulgar opulence. Oh! surely, surely, in life's catalogue of moral evils, there is no suffering so insupportable as the pang which illiberal and oppressive ignorance inflicts on the mind of genius and sensibility. I indeed could not boast of the former, but of the latter I had but too large a portion: from a situation which alone can be called the slavery of the mind, I was called to be the acknowledged heiress of the house of Desmond. My new-found parent gave a new pulsation to my heart; and a quiet acquiescence in an uninterrupted contentment, rendered me equally exempt from the extreme of pleasure or pain, when a circumstance occurred which gave a new colour to my life, and made me the inheritress of my mother's thwarted destiny. I was so fortunate (shall I not rather say unfortunate?) as to attract the attention of Colonel L——, and his evident predilection in my favour revived the wishes of both our families that the houses of Desmond and L—— should be united. I was at a time of life, when the heart expands to the reception of every affection, when the soul is alive to

the tenderest impressions, and the restless feelings anxiously seek an object to engross their thousand glowing sensibilities. The Colonel was in every respect the most superior man I had ever met with, and soon awakened a tenderness in a heart I believed inaccessible to a second love. Virtue sanctioned the passion which was favoured by circumstances, and the desire to heal those wounds my mother had inflicted confirmed its duration. The length of time which was to elapse previous to our marriage was a state of probation adequate to prove the stability of first love ; and the certainty which attended that love was far from being favourable to a passion which, capricious and inconsistent, is cherished by doubt, strengthened by obstacles, and supported by apprehension. The absence of the Colonel was of some length ; but his affections, like his character, determined, equable, and consistent, were equally incapable of variation or increase ; —but with me the first delightful effusions of a first passion gradually vanished ; I sighed for that reciprocity of sentiment, that congeniality of taste, that similitude of manner, which can alone give permanency to love. The Colonel was sensible and amiable, and still held the first place in my heart ; but he was far from reaching that standard of perfection which I had

roman-

romantically erected within my own breast. He was not a St. Preux, he was not a Werter, he was not such a man as in an evil moment, when my guardian angel slumbered on his post, became known to me, and was worthy of being known to you. There might I rest my eulogium; from the first moment of our acquaintance the soothing flattery of self-love taught me to assimilate St. Clair's character with all I most valued in my own; and I fondly believed that sympathy had drawn our souls together by those indissoluble ties which resist the power of time and the opposition of fortune. Interesting without the affectation of sentiment, instructive without the ostentatious display of superior acquirement, my new and dangerous friend stole on the heart while he seemed only to aim at the mind; and while he taught me to love virtue, the passion insensibly deviated from the principle to the object who inculcated it; nor did I love it less for loving it most in him, who was its most amiable representative. It was thus the poison of an ill-fated passion insinuated itself into my breast, and reason could urge no argument against that sentiment which engaged me through the medium of virtue. The feelings to which I had been newly awakened, contrasted with those excited

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by

by my destined husband, were sufficient to overthrow my belief in the infallibility of first love. Yet I still considered myself the wife of Colonel L——, and bound to fulfil a contract to which my heart had once so freely subscribed, and which was to disseminate peace and happiness to those I most loved ; for many a fond tie was interwoven in the complicated tissue of my destiny ! I dared not consider one man as a lover while the affianced bride of another : then the sophistry of the heart exerted its powers of delusion ; love assumed the name of sympathy and sentiment, and an intimacy the most impassioned was termed a platonic connexion.

An intercourse with such a mind as St. Clair's soon became necessary to the happiness of my being : I thought it invigorated the mind while it soothed the heart ; and I readily believed a tender and delightful sentiment could subsist between the two sexes, which, less than love and more than friendship, should vibrate between the best emotions of both ; partaking of their purest principles, and participating in their more precious delights. I considered such a sentiment as the finest movement of the soul, and alone capable of existing in a mind the most refined and elevated. I did not conceive that a connexion so spiritualized was inimical to my character as a

wife, nor that the most tenacious husband could object to a friendship that was the best proof of the purity of those hearts that cherished it. In short, there was for me but one road to happiness, and while I wandered in delightful delirium along its flowery labyrinth, I closed my eyes to the dreadful vista which terminated its prospect. Thus self-deceived, I gave myself up to the most enchanting dreams; and the golden hours that marked the short period of my dangerous bliss still dwell on my memory like a vision that gave me a glimpse of a more beatific life than this world could afford: the mind entered into the wanderings of the heart, the delicacy of sentiment moderated the ardours of passion; and if Love ever shewed his glowing form, it was reposing on the bosom of the Graces. I do not think my unfortunate friend was actuated by principles less pure than those by which I fondly deceived myself; and we both evinced the truth of Lord Bacon's assertion, that "the affections ever carry an appetite to good, as reason doth; the difference is, affection beholdeth merely the present; reason beholdeth the future and sum of time." We indeed lived for the present, but it was "the life of life." Without the society of one congenial being who could cherish his inherent genius or draw forth his shining

qualities, St. Clair eagerly clung to the heart that alone palpitated in unison with his own; and, while he believed virtue guided him in the choice, he could not apprehend that its tendency was vice: but the same fire that warmed his genius inflamed his passions, and the same sensibility of feeling that sublimated his heart, awakened it to the most dangerous of emotions.—His mind, organized for the more acute and powerful operations of the passions, was impracticable to an effort of concealment or dissimulation; and the impassioned sentiments of fervid and impetuous affections too soon burst beyond the boundaries of honour and prudence, and, while they betrayed their own existence, awakened a similar return in a bosom but too much alive to their resistless power. Alas! the effort of self-deception I had imposed on myself insensibly ceased to operate; the sweet approvings of conscious rectitude no longer cheered my mind; the gay simplicity of untarnished innocence no longer animated my spirits; and even the fatal delusions which had usurped their place gradually faded away, and left me the victim of ungovernable passion, more wretched from the struggles of retreating virtue still combating the encroachments of vice, till its last vital spark was extinguished in the unequal contest: and



and oh! the last struggle between virtue and error is the most exquisite refinement on misery the human mind is susceptible of. Sometimes determined to make all known to him who was on the point of being united to me for ever; sometimes on the point of flying to you, and, while I poured my sorrows and my errors into your bosom, steal from it in return its tranquillity and peace; and sometimes, oh God! on the point of sacrificing all to that fatal passion which rose in proportion to those efforts my understanding faintly made towards its extinction; my life became insupportable, and the native honesty of my character subtilizing to the low finesses of dissimulation, forced a smile on my countenance, which still wore that stamp of contentment that no longer dwelt in the heart of which it was once the index. I made an effort to terminate a little correspondence, which, though not always material in its import, still insensibly added a ligament to the lines I was twining round my soul. I wept over the success of my effort, and deplored the obedience I had extorted. I wished to avoid the object of my tenderness, and hoped to be avoided in return. My heart triumphed in the disappointment of my wishes and the frustration of my hopes. Sometimes careless even to volatility, and

cold even to indifference, I fancied my conduct was actuated by prudence; till love taught me to feel I was only influenced by the variety of its unceasing operations, insensibly deviating into coquetry, to maintain that power whose extinction was feared by the restless anxiety of passion, whose influence should have been destroyed by the exertion of reason and virtue.

Such was the situation of my mind when the day of my intended marriage with Colonel L—— was fixed. I could not disappoint the noble confidence he had placed in the fidelity of my affections; I could not deprive myself of his esteem, which I yet valued beyond that of any other human being; I could not destroy the fond hopes which had so long animated the heart of my grandfather, or cloud with sorrow and disappointment the lingering beam that shone upon the evening of his life. In short, while my wishes and my thoughts were equally criminal, my conduct still wore the character of propriety and virtue, until in an evil hour, seduced by opportunity, impelled by passion, two days before that appointed for my marriage I deposited the secret of my heart in the bosom of him who had excited it, and at the same moment learnt what I had all along been but too conscious of, what  
I dreaded



I dreaded to reflect on, and died to hear—that I was beloved ! beloved by one whose refinement of sentiment, ardour of passion, and stability of mind, rendered him the most delicate, the most ardent, the most unalterable of lovers. Sweet and dangerous was the conviction ; and while it seized on every avenue to my heart, prudence, propriety, and peace fled it for ever ! In short, the day previous to that which was to make me the wife of one man, I consented to a private interview with another—what followed you are but too well acquainted with. I have, indeed, escaped some part of the criminality which I doubt not the world, prone to invidious supposition, has attached to my conduct ; a conduct but too culpable, independent of malicious representation. But the woman who violates the natural decorums of her sex, which are her virtue's best safeguard ; who suffers her moral sense to be vanquished by the sophistry of reasoning vice ; and who nourishes a criminal passion under the guise of sentiment, has little to boast of personal preservation ; when the most sacred recess of the temple becomes polluted, if the vestibule escapes violation it must owe its security to accident.

In unfolding to you, my revered parent, the progress of my love, and of my consequent misfortunes, I have insensibly displayed

played by what imperceptible gradations virtue sinks into vice ; that to be guilty it is not requisite to be inherently bad ; and that error of conduct has no inseparable connexion with depravity of character. Oh you ! author of my existence, and, still more, father of my mind, which was formed under the culture of your fostering care ; you who best illustrated virtue by your example, and confirmed its empire in my heart by your precepts, you best know how dearly I loved virtue for virtue's sake ; and yet the weak, the ignorant, the vicious mind, by the indulgence of its most pernicious propensities, could not have produced effects more prejudicial to the peace and well-being of society, than I have done by resigning myself to the first impulse of my passions, and by perverting the faculties of my reason to sanction the errors of my inclination.

THE END.

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